

**The Colonial Indian Army: Recruitment And Command Mechanism,
1859-1913**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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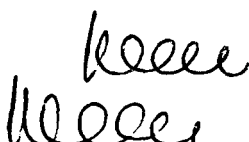


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CERTIFICATE

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List of Abbreviations

<i>Army committee</i>	<i>Proceedings of the army in India committee 1912</i> (Simla, 1913)
<i>Bull. Hist. Med.</i>	<i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i>
<i>CJH</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of History</i>
<i>Eden commission</i>	<i>Report of the special commission appointed by the</i> <i>Governor General in council to inquire into the</i> <i>organization of the Indian Army</i> (Simla, 1879)
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>G.O.</i>	General Orders by the Commander-in-Chief
<i>Hamilton papers</i>	Private papers of George Hamilton
<i>Hancock report</i>	<i>Report of Major General H. Hancock on the</i> <i>organization of the Indian Army</i> , Cd 2516 (London, 1859)
<i>IESHR</i>	<i>Indian Economic and Social History Review</i>
<i>JAS</i>	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>JICH</i>	<i>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JSAHR</i>	<i>Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research</i>
<i>JUSII</i>	<i>Journal of the United Service Institution of India</i>
<i>Kitchener papers</i>	Private papers of Lord Kitchener
<i>MAS</i>	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
<i>M.D.P.</i>	Military Department Proceedings
<i>M/F</i>	Microfilm

Military letters from Nepal	Military letters from the Resident at Nepal regarding the Gurkha auxiliary expedition at Lucknow, 1857-1859
N.A.I.	National Archives of India
Norman minutes	Military miscellaneous minutes by Major General H.W. Norman, 1863-76
<i>Parliamentary papers (1867)</i>	<i>Parliamentary papers, Return East India and native troops, Commons 500 (1867)</i>
<i>Peel committee</i>	<i>Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the organization of the Indian Army, Cd 2515 (London, 1859)</i>
P.W.D.	Public Works Department
<i>SIH</i>	<i>Studies in History</i>
<i>Supplementary report</i>	<i>Papers connected with the reorganization of the army in India supplementary to the report of the army commission, Cd 2541, 1859.</i>
W.B.S.A.	West Bengal State Archives
4 th Battalion	Digest of services of the 4 th Battalion 9 th Jat Regiment
8 th Bombay Infantry	Historical Records of the 8 th Regiment Bombay Infantry, 1768-1893
9 th Bombay Regiment	Historical records of the 9 th Bombay Regiment
14 th Madras Infantry	Digest of services of the 14 th Regiment of the Madras Infantry, 1775-1913
28 th Bombay Regiment	Lieutenant (Adjutant) Carter, Record Book of 28 th Regiment Bombay Infantry, 1846-1913

44th Merwara Infantry

Digest of services of the 44th Merwara Infantry,
1818-1916

Preface

The origin of this thesis can be traced to my childhood interest in matters military. Before going to sleep I would ask my father to tell me stories. He would tell me about the German *Blitzkrieg* and the Japanese advance in Singapore. I little realized that, from these bed time stories, I would develop a strong interest which in turn would shape my career.

While doing my Ph. D. I went through cycles of depression and frustration. I am indebted to my supervisor for his constant encouragement and his generosity in accepting my idiosyncratic behaviour. My thanks to Professor Neeladri Bhattacharya for critical comments on my earlier drafts. I am thankful to Professor Seema Alavi and late Professor P.S. Gupta for reading part of my drafts. And I greatly appreciate Professor Dharma Kumar's affectionate help during the early stages of the research.

This thesis would not have been possible without the moral and financial support from my parents and my sister. I also thank Suhrita for forcing me to complete the thesis as quickly as possible, just as the German generals pressurized by their *Fuehrer* would like to finish an operation.

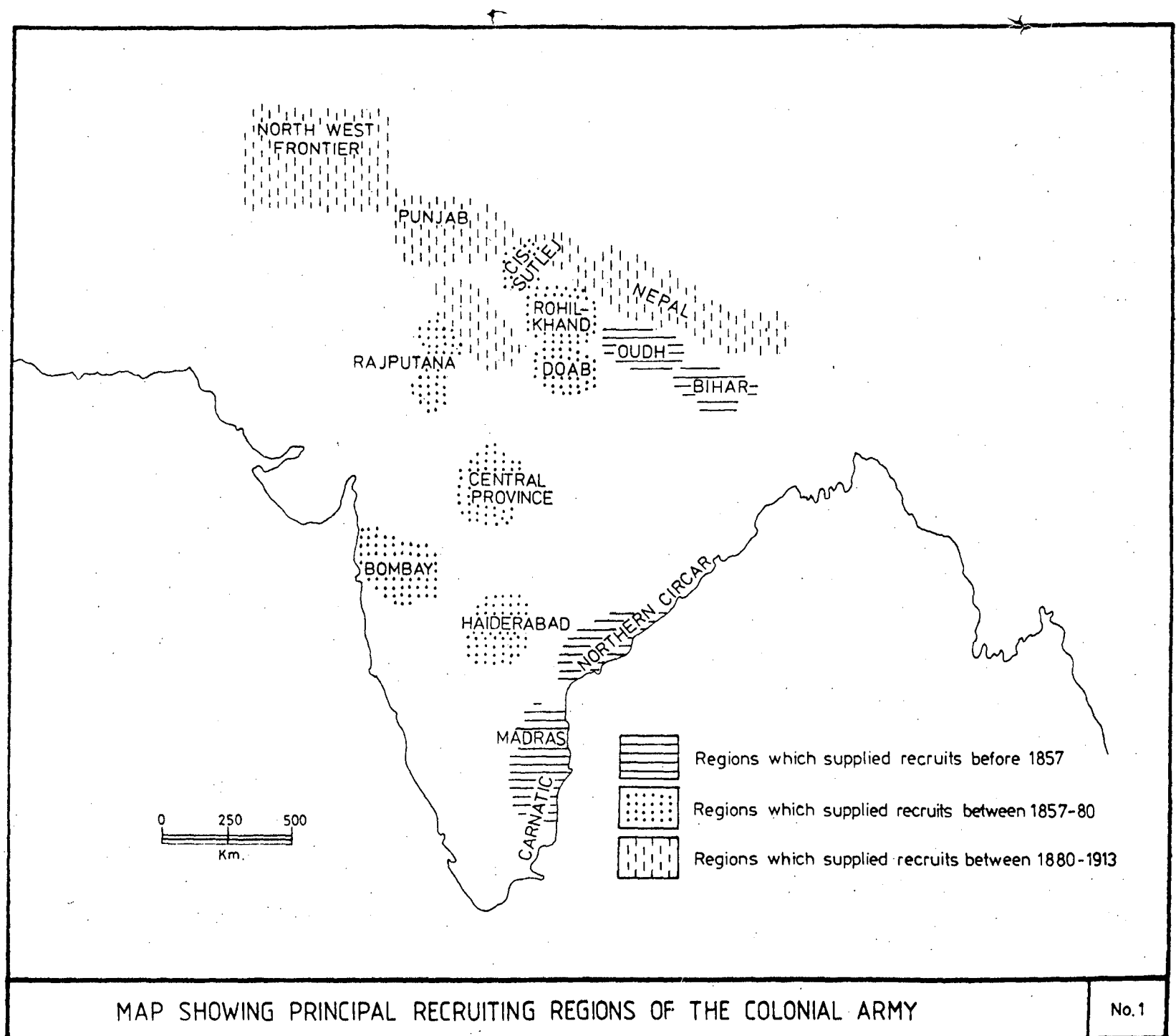
This Ph. D exemplifies a type of military history which is something more than operational details. But that does not mean that only social and cultural dimensions ought to be considered in accordance with current fashion.

Kaushik Roy

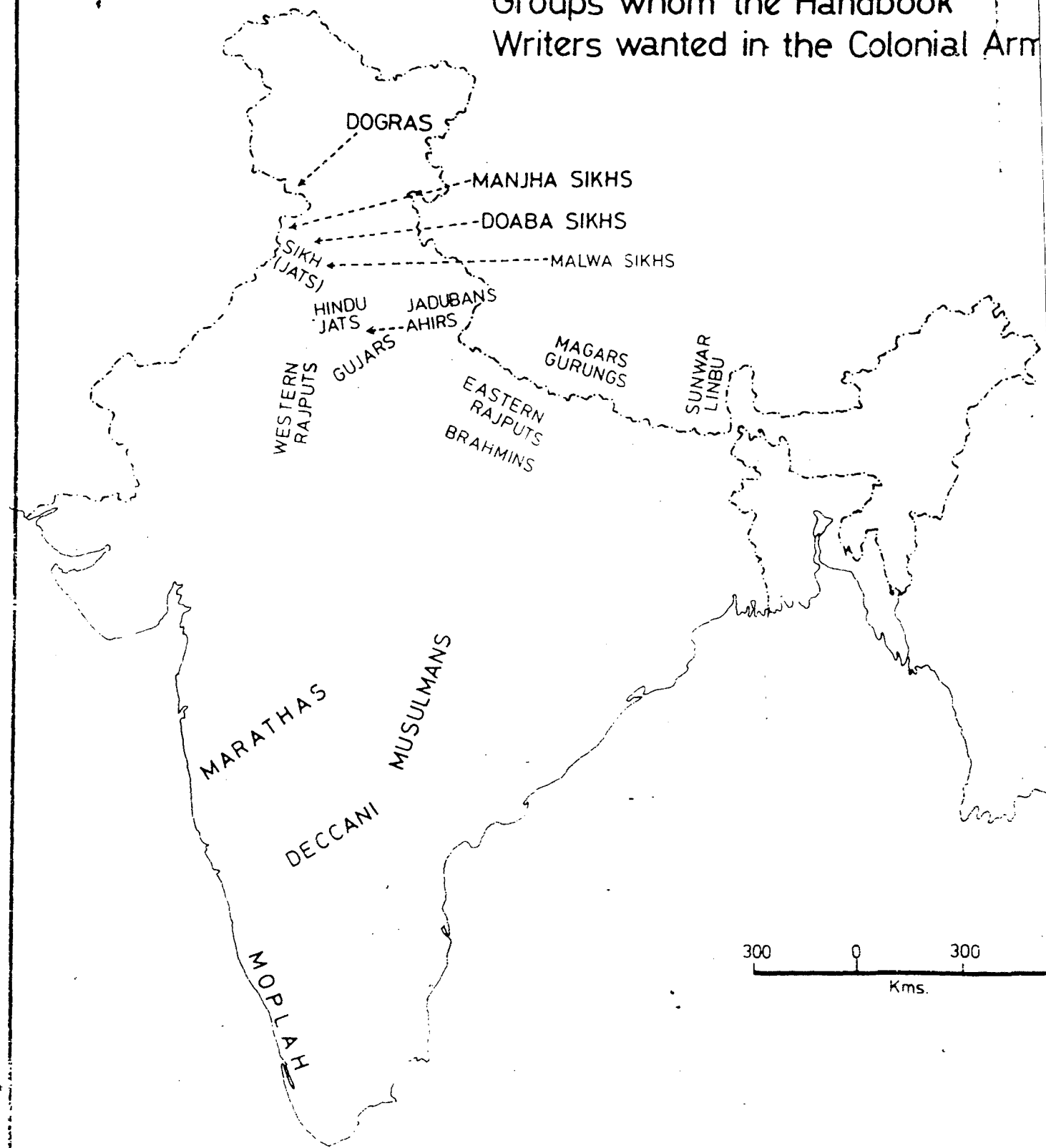
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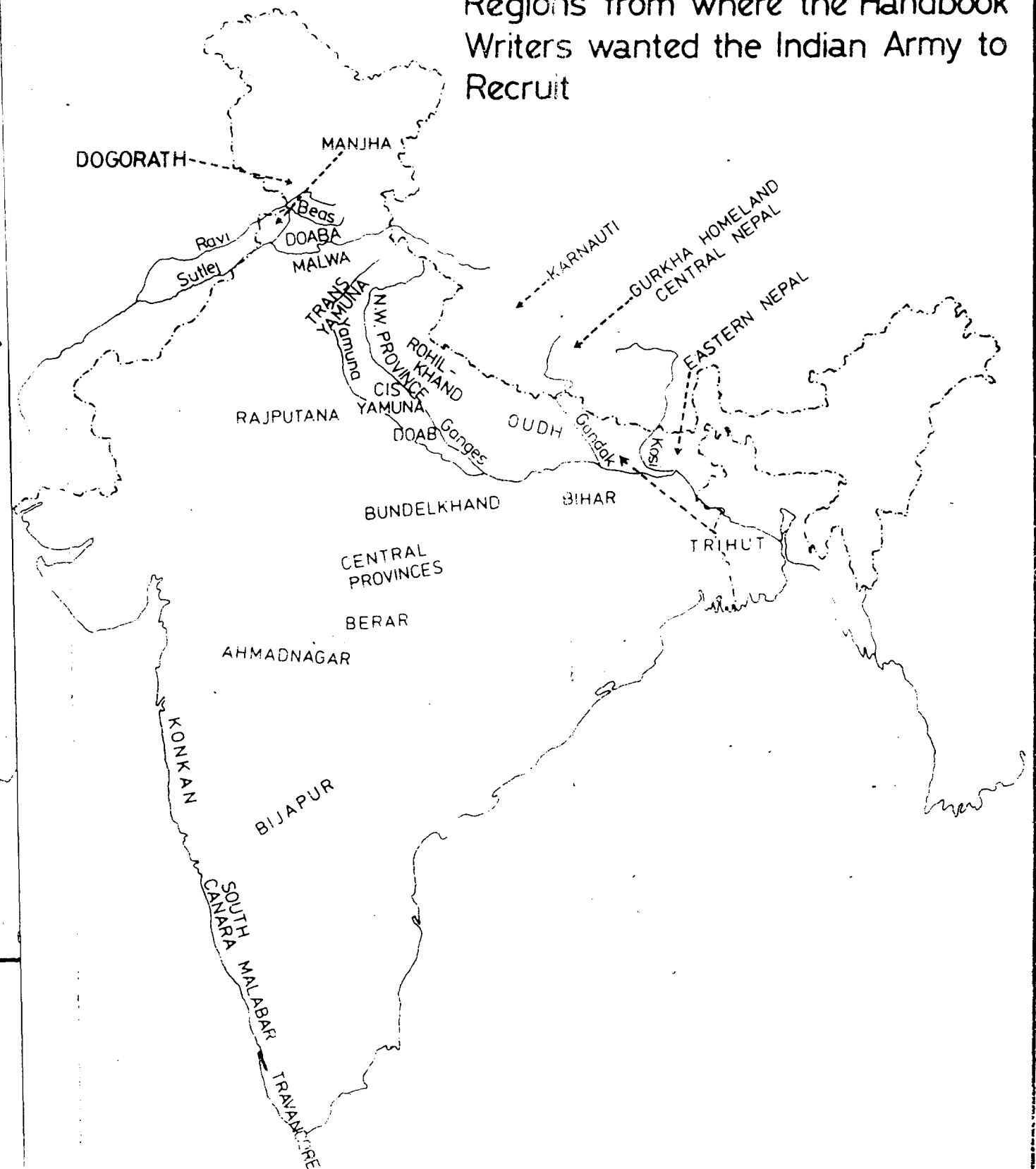
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Map No.2 Showing the Different Groups whom the Handbook Writers wanted in the Colonial Army



Map No.3 Showing the Different Regions from where the Handbook Writers wanted the Indian Army to Recruit



Introduction

The considerations which are involved in every question that does or may effect...our Native army are, in my mind, of the highest importance. It cannot too often be repeated, this army is our safety and our danger...we have through the efforts of our Native army, triumphed in wars, and rebellious plots and conspiracies.

John Malcolm, 1830¹

The Sepoy Army was the pivot of Britain's Indian empire. Often the fate of the subcontinent was decided in gargantuan battles, like Assaye and Imphal, conducted by the Indian Army. The Indian army was a dangerous combat force as it destroyed all the contemporary military powers within South Asia. For London, the Indian Army functioned as an Imperial Fire Brigade for policing India as well as the British overseas possessions, and as an Imperial Reserve during the two World Wars.² For the colonized also, the colonial army was vital, as it was one of the largest employers in India and it consumed a huge chunk of the government's revenue.³

¹ Minute by J. Malcolm, Bombay, 27 Nov. 1830, *Parliamentary papers* (1867), p. 179.

² G.J. Bryant, 'Pacification in the Early British Raj, 1775-1785', *JICH*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1985), pp. 3-19; Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj: From the Great Indian Mutiny to Independence, 1858-1947* (London, 1989), pp. 65-77, 105-19, 191-203, 248-26, 303-17; Lieutenant General S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty First Century* (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 1-80, 144-87, 241-62, 340-71; Lieutenant F.G. Cardew, *A Sketch of the Services of the Native Army to the year 1895* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1971), pp. 74-75, 109-10, 193-94, 316-17, 378-79, 381-88, 428.

³ In the twentieth century, the share of defence was about 30% of the government's budget. The size of the Indian Army during peace exceeded 100,000 and the annual demand of the army was about 20,000 men. T.A. Heathcote, *The Military in British India: The Development of British Land Forces*

Nevertheless, the Indian Army remains marginal in Indian historiography. The Nationalist-Marxist historiography as represented by Bipan Chandra⁴ focuses on the Gandhian national movement. Subaltern historiography accepts that the 'popular rebellion' in 1857 became possible only when the Bengal Army mutinied.⁵ However, the army remains the missing dimension in both frameworks.

The role of the armed forces in the construction of colonialism is not entirely missed out in the British-Imperial historiography. What I label as a 'Technological Determinist' approach, emphasizes the role of military hardware. In his work of synthesis, the American historian Daniel Headrick claims that their superior weapons system enabled the Europeans to defeat Africans and Asians.⁶

Modern researches have shown that there was no technological gap as regards the military technology used by the British led armies and the forces of the indigenous powers in the subcontinent. A British historian has shown that in the post 1859 northwest frontier warfare, advanced technology did not aid the Raj against the tribal

in *South Asia, 1600-1947* (Manchester, 1995), p. 241; David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (Manchester, 1994), p. 78; *Army committee vol. 1-A, Minority report*, pp. 156, 158.

⁴ Bipan Chandra et. al. *India's Struggle for Independence* (1988, reprint, New Delhi, 1989).

⁵ Two representatives of this school are Rudrangshu Mukherjee's *Awadh in Revolt, 1857-1858: A Study of Popular Resistance* (New Delhi, 1984) and Tapti Roy's *The Politics of a Popular Uprising: Bundelkhand in 1857* (New Delhi, 1994).

⁶ Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1981).

guerrillas.⁷ Even in the first half of the 19th century, the Raj enjoyed no technical edge over its opponents. The Maratha field artillery was technically at the same level with the cannons deployed by the Company.⁸

That different military establishments, despite possessing same level of technology, had different sorts of military cultures, which in turn generated asymmetric military effectiveness, is the operative assumption of a approach which I term as the 'Strategic Culture' approach. Dirk Kolff asserts that the chief factor was the Maratha political culture which in turn shaped the nature of warfare. He seems to make a case that the Asian culture of warfare did not grasp the logic of the Western form of warfare-the quest for decisive battles for complete annihilation of the enemy.⁹ This line of argument is pushed forward by Jos Gommans who claims that the Western concept of total military victory was absent among the Asians.¹⁰

What Kolff and Gommans forget is that decisive battles for total destruction of the enemy were practised in India in the pre British times. The First Battle of Panipat is a case in point.

⁷ T.R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (London, 1998).

⁸ John Pemble, 'Resources and Techniques in the Second Maratha War', *Historical Journal*, vol. 19 (1976), pp. 375-404.

⁹ Dirk H. A. Kolff, 'The End of an *Ancien Regime*: Colonial War in India', in J.A. De Moor and H.L. Wessling (eds), *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa* (Leiden, 1989), pp. 22-49.

¹⁰ Jos Gommans, 'Indian Warfare and Afghan Innovation during the Eighteenth Century', *SIH*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1995), pp. 261-80.

To explain the military supremacy of the numerically inferior British-Indian Army, both in the decisive battles against the Marathas and the Sikhs before 1850, and in the low-intensity conflicts against the tribals of northeast and northwest India in the second half of the 19th century, a group focuses on the symbiotic relationship between the colonial army and the Indian society. Since this perspective assumes that social factors shaped the configuration of the armed forces, this group could be categorized as the 'Societal Determinists'. Seema Alavi and Stephen Peter Rosen, the two spokesmen of this School argue that the colonial army was able to dominate the Indian society by functioning as a vehicle of upward mobility for certain key social groups.¹¹

That superior managerial expertise, as evident in the cohesive internal structure of the Raj's military establishment, made its army dominant, is the basic premise of a certain group of historians. Because of their preoccupation with the structural aspects of the military forces, this approach is labeled as the 'Organizational' perspective. This methodology points out that the army was a complex bureaucracy with its own ethos, code of conduct and laws, and that it was alienated from the social fabric. Hence social imperatives could not totally explain the inner configuration of the armed forces. What were the institutional characteristics of the Raj's army? Geoffrey Parker asserts that the Western style armies, which were based on drilled infantry armed with muskets, were the products of the Military Revolution in early modern Europe. When imported in the Afro-Asian world, they gave the Westerners supremacy.¹²

¹¹ Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (New Delhi, 1995); Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and its Armies* (New Delhi, 1996).

¹² Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800*

What Parker's broad survey misses out is that the Sepoy Army, the work horse of British imperialism, was a hybrid organization which integrated elements of the traditional military system with the Western military organization. Hence the conceptual framework of Military Synthesis is more applicable.

My focus will be on the institutional aspects of the Indian Army. I will ask who were inducted in the service, and how they were controlled. The bloodbath of 1857 involved massive changes in the social architecture and the organizational format of the army. Later, from 1914 onwards, the colonial army registered massive expansion. So the period between the 1857 Mutiny and the First World War, which is the time frame of my study, constitutes a sort of historical unity. However, 1857 did not represent a complete break with the past. The implications of my study have bearings for the earlier period also. Section I examines the literature on recruitment. The next section evaluates the historiography of the Indian Army's command structure.

I

The Martial Race Theory as an Interpretative Framework

The British-Indian Army had to use South Asian manpower, as Britain lacked an adequate number of males to garrison her colonies. Moreover, Indians were cheaper and far more effective in the Indian climate.¹³ For inducting indigenous manpower, the imperialists fabricated the Martial Race theory. Though scholarly understanding of this ideology has changed with time, the Martial Race paradigm dominates analysis of

(Cambridge, 1988).

¹³ *Peel committee*, pp. 1, 11.

military recruitment.

The Martial Race Theory as a Recruitment Strategy

Did the British have any consistent plans as regards recruitment, or was it *ad hoc*? For a number of authors, the Martial Race ideology was an integral part of the Raj's recruitment strategy. They view the Martial Race theory as part of the British policy geared towards the internal consolidation of the colonial order.

N. C. Chaudhuri, K. M. L. Saxena and Chander S. Sundaram can be categorized as belonging to the Nationalist camp, because they presume that the British deliberately used the Martial Race theory to prevent the growth of nationalism in India, for furthering the imperial hegemony. They thus subscribe to the view that the Martial race theory was a sort of imperial conspiracy.

Chaudhuri wrote a series of articles in the 1930s,¹⁴ which mark the beginning of academic writings on the colonial army's enlistment policy. Earlier, a Bengali named P. D. Bonarjee, who worked in the military department, wrote a book¹⁵ on the 'martial races'. But while Bonarjee accepts the imperial stereotypes as regards the various Indian communities, unlike him, Chaudhuri attempts to show the hollowness of these stereotypes through rigorous analysis. Chaudhuri's essays are part of the Moderate paradigm (those who demanded Dominion Status) to debunk the imperial recruitment programme. Chaudhuri tries to disprove the British view that, if they left India, then

¹⁴ Nirad C. Chaudhuri, 'The Martial Races of India', *Modern Review*, vol. XLVIII, no. 1 (1930), pp. 41-51, no. 3, (1930), pp. 295-305, vol. XLIX, no. 1(1931), pp. 67-79, no. 2 (1931), pp. 215-28, 'India and Imperial Defence', vol. XLIX, no.4 (1931), pp. 386-96.

¹⁵ P.D. Bonarjee, *A Handbook of the Fighting Races of India* (Calcutta, 1899).

the 'martial races' would exploit the non-martial people and for this reason, India should not get Independence. Chaudhuri attempts a comparison between the metropolitan and the colonial military establishments. He asserts that the Indian Army was used for guarding India against the Indians. So it could not afford short service enlistment of all types of Indians, as European armies did with Europeans in Europe. Universal military service was prevented by the Martial Race ideology. For him, this theory was an imperial technique to confine recruitment to certain selected groups. The Martial Race theory also stifled the growth of nationalism among the soldiers by emphasizing caste and tribal loyalties.

The next attempt to revive the Nationalist approach is Saxena's monograph.¹⁶ Like his predecessor, Saxena links recruitment with the strategic deployment of the army. Saxena writes that recruitment was guided by the 'Divide and Rule' principle, as the army's main function after 1857 was internal security. The British balanced different social and religious groups from different regions against each other. Saxena asserts that the Martial Race ideology was the continuation of the '*Divide et Impera*' strategy as the various martial groups balanced each other in the war machine.

In two articles, Chander S. Sundaram shows that in the late 19th century Indian Army a marginal faction was for commissioning Indians as officers.¹⁷ His originality

¹⁶ K.M.L. Saxena, *The Military System of India: 1850-1900* (New Delhi, 1974).

¹⁷ Chandar S. Sundaram, 'Preventing "Idleness": The Maharajah of Cooch Behar's Proposal for Officer Commissions in the British Army for the Sons of Indian Princes and Gentlemen, 1897-1898', *South Asia*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1995), pp. 115-30, "'Martial" Indian Aristocrats and the Military System of the Raj: The Imperial Cadet Corps, 1900-1914', *JICH*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1997), pp. 415-39.

lies in shifting the focus to the effects of Martial Race ideology on the scheme of Indianization of the officer corps. The imperial conviction was that if at all the Indians were to be made officers then it would be better to enlist the loyal 'martial' groups rather than the seditious babus.

Besides the Nationalist approach, we have the Functionalist perspective which argues that the imperatives of ruling India and certain traits of the Indian society gave rise to the Martial Race ideology. The spokesmen of this approach are the historian David Omissi, an ex-I.C.S. officer Philip Mason and the American political scientist Stephen P. Cohen.

Cohen's monograph¹⁸ asserts that the Indian Army's recruitment policy was an imperial response towards two bipolar components of the indigenous society. These were the militarism of the landed gentry and the rising nationalism of the middle class. The British evolved the Martial Race theory, which was a formula for excluding the politically conscious groups.

The quasi-popular book by Mason, which gives a picturesque impression of the Raj's armed forces, also considers the social and political imperatives behind the propagation of the Martial Race ideology.¹⁹ Mason writes that colonialism was viable because it utilized the traditional elements of indigenous society. This was reflected in the colonial military machine's recruitment. Both Cohen and Mason accept that the intellectual paradigm of the Martial Race ideology was rooted in indigenous society.

¹⁸ Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (1971, reprint, New Delhi, 1991).

¹⁹ Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (1974, reprint, DehraDun, 1988).

While Cohen says that the British exaggerated and systematized the mental and physical differences among the different indigenous groups, Mason goes to the other extreme and puts the onus fully on Hindu civilization. He argues that the Martial Race ideologues did not fabricate an imaginary martial-unmartial division among the Indian groups but made use of the Hindu division of labour in which Kshatriyas were natural warriors. However, both Mason and Cohen do not pursue rigorously the indigenous roots of the Martial Race ideology.

About two decades after Mason, Omissi of Hull University discussed the issue of the social and political basis of recruitment.²⁰ For Omissi, the recruitment policy was composed of two components. His contribution is to focus on the indigenous component of the British recruitment programme-only those groups responded to the call of arms for whom soldiering offered advantages. The principal component was the imperial agenda-the search for loyal and brave soldiers, which was shaped by the colonizer's need to sustain his regime by dividing and manipulating different Indian groups. The process of categorization and classification helped the Raj to identify potential allies, who were then drawn into the army. In an article,²¹ Omissi, like Chaudhuri, argues that the Martial Race theory was merely the extension of the Divide and Rule strategy. But Omissi modifies his interpretation in his monograph, where he writes that due to the principle of 'Divide and Rule' the colonial army enlisted selected groups from a particular area. The theory of the Martial Races as it evolved in the

²⁰ Omissi, *Sepoy and the Raj*.

²¹ David Omissi, "'Martial Races': Ethnicity and Security in Colonial India, 1858-1939", *War & Society*, vol. 9, no. 1(1991), pp. 1-27.

1880s, appropriated the idea of enlistment of the selected few, thus resulting in Punjabization. This was adequate for meeting the limited manpower demand of the small colonial wars. So all went well, till the World Wars ripped apart the colonial army.

Ethnicity and the Martial Race Theory

In the 1980s a new tool, that of ethnicity, was introduced by the political sociologist Cynthia H. Enloe, for understanding the Martial Race ideology. For Enloe, the members of an ethnic group believe in common descent and possess a distinct geographical and cultural identity. Enloe and DeWitt C. Ellinwood claim that the recruitment of the ethnically distinct regiments (Sikhs, Gurkhas) by the Raj was the British response to social reality. Religion, caste and region fragment Indian society. These fissures fragment the social complexions of the military forces.²²

There is a lacuna in Enloe and Ellinwood's framework. They have used ethnicity as a catch-all term. Enloe and Ellinwood's portrayal of ethnic politics by the colonial army appear similar to Saxena's 'Divide and Rule' policy. However, on one point they differ from Saxena. Saxena says that this Divide and Rule strategy had no roots in the Indian society, because indigenous society was not divisive but imperial politics fragmented it. But Enloe and Ellinwood argue that the politics of divided communities was the result of the fragmentation of Indian society.

²² Cynthia H. Enloe, 'Ethnicity in the Evolution of Asia's Armed Bureaucracies', in Enloe and DeWitt C. Ellinwood (eds), *Ethnicity and the Military in Asia* (New Brunswick and London, 1981), pp. 1-17; DeWitt C. Ellinwood, 'Ethnicity in a Colonial Asian Army: British Policy, War, and the Indian Army, 1914-1918', in Enloe et. al. (eds), *Ethnicity and the Military*, pp. 89-144.

To sum up, the British had different recruitment policies at various moments of time. Unlike Saxena, Omissi does not accept the Martial Race theory as the continuation of 'Divide and Rule' policy. But he does not clearly differentiate these two ideologies. Saxena's attempt to establish continuity throughout the second half of the 19th century is problematic. The Martial Race ideology was not the continuation but the opposite of the 'Divide and Rule' strategy. While the 'Divide and Rule' policy aimed to establish a balance between various groups recruited from all over India, the Martial Race ideology aimed at intensive recruitment from particular areas like Nepal and Punjab.²³

Imperial Diplomacy and the Martial Race Theory

Thus the British had complicated ideologies. But the brassstacks of recruitment was something more than the imperial attitudes. Especially when the British cast their nets to draw recruits from beyond their actual line of control, like from Nepal, the recruitment policy, argues a group of scholars, involved *realpolitik*. Since this group turns the flashlight on the tortuous diplomatic activities of the British policy makers and the Kathmandu government, their approach could be labelled as the 'Diplomacy' perspective. Two scholars, Mary Des Chene, an American, and Purushottam Banskota, a Nepali, explore the linkages between recruitment of the 'martial races' and the Raj's coercive diplomacy.

Clausewitz has argued that war is the continuation of politics by other means.

²³ *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 156; *Supplementary report*, p. 4, Appendix no. 22.

Des Chene in her article shows that recruitment was continuation of diplomacy by other means.²⁴ Nepal was an independent state, and enlisting her subjects necessitated diplomatic manoeuvrings, which Des Chene and Banskota chart. They write that the Gurkhas became vital to the Raj with the rise of the Martial Race theory in the last decades of the 19th century. The Nepali elites used the Gurkhas as bargaining counters to extract the maximum advantage from British India. In return for Gurkha recruitment, the Ranas retained their autonomy. The impact of Kathmandu's court politics on recruitment is elaborated by Banskota.²⁵ Banskota writes that factionalism pushed the court towards the British. In 1885, the Shamsheer Ranas acquired power after a coup. To prevent the British from supporting the Jang Bahadur Ranas who had lost power, the Shamsheer Ranas agreed to supply Gurkhas to the British.

Demography and the Martial Race Ideology

That the size and composition of the armies were also shaped by long term impersonal forces like demography, is the argument of a group of historians who could be classified as 'Demographic Determinists'. Dirk Kolff and F.W. Perry agree that, not the official mind of imperialism or the underlying social and cultural milieu of the subcontinent, but manpower resources were the principal historical primer in shaping the contours of the militaries. They make clear that due to the massive human resources of India, the British could afford to be choosy about which groups to recruit

²⁴ Mary Des Chene, 'Soldiers, Sovereignty and Silences: Gorkhas as Diplomatic Currency', *South Asia Bulletin*, vol. 13, nos. 1-2 (1993), pp. 67-80.

²⁵ Purushottam Banskota, *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British Indian Army* (New Delhi, 1994).

and designate as 'martial'.

Kolff writes that if one takes a long *duree* perspective then it is clear that the key factor, which shaped the Sepoy Army's enlistment, was the huge supply of manpower linked with the ecology of the subcontinent.²⁶ On the basis of these related factors, Kolff constructs a cyclical model for explaining recruitment from the 15th to the mid 19th century. For Kolff, India always had a huge surplus manpower, which could not be accommodated in the semi-pastoralist agrarian economy. Treacherous monsoons frequently caused famines, which pushed the surplus labour into part time military service. As warfare was endemic among the Indian powers, there was a constant demand for military manpower. So a tradition of armed service evolved among the north Indian peasantry. The Company also tapped this source of armed manpower. A vicious circle developed. Extra manpower was pushed towards the armies and some ex-soldiers came back to their villages with loot. They married and their sons were forced to become armed retainers during harvest failures. This cycle ended from about 1790 onwards, because the British demilitarized the military labour market by creating a centralized empire.

For the manpower problem of the Indian Army during the two World Wars we have F.W. Perry's monograph which shows that the manpower pools of the respective countries shaped the size of the armies of Britain and the Commonwealth.²⁷ In his framework the influence of demography was mediated through other factors like the

²⁶ Dirk H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, 1990).

²⁷ F.W. Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organisation in two World Wars*

relation between the armies and the politics. During the two World Wars the armies registered massive expansion. Britain introduced conscription in 1916 but this was not possible in India for political reasons. However this was not an obstacle in expanding colonial recruitment because of the huge manpower resources of the subcontinent. The Indian Army was capable of expanding even after 1919. In 1943, expansion of the Indian Army ceased due to lack of equipment.

Kolff and Perry have opened up a new perspective by connecting the growth of the armies with the available demographic resources, making ideology and diplomacy appear secondary. While the chief determinant in Kolff's model is ecology, Perry fuses the effects of demography and polity. Perry's methodology is too mechanical. He deals with dry statistics, with such questions as the number of units, and does not take into account the passions and emotions of the recruits.

Historians of Ideas and the Martial Races

Imperial and Indigenous perceptions of the 'martial' recruits are the concern of another batch of scholars. Since these scholars examine the role of ideas behind the imperial and colonial views as regards the 'warrior' groups, their approach could be termed as the 'History of Ideas' approach. British recruitment of indigenous manpower created stereotypes among the officers about certain groups. These historians ask the questions: What were the constituent parts of such stereotypes? Did the Indians believe in such imperial constructs or did they have their own images of the recruits?

British officers believed that the Gurkhas were warlike. Lionel Caplan argues that the British literature on the Gurkhas was an attempt by the colonizers to imagine a

part of the exotic Orient.²⁸

What then was the causation behind imperial ideas? Pradeep Barua throws new light on the imperatives behind the Martial Race doctrine.²⁹ For him, it was neither the pragmatic demands of the 'Divide and Rule' policy, nor the nature of Indian society, but the Western intellectual climate which shaped the Martial Race theory. Barua assumes that ideas do play an autonomous and important role in history. He writes that the Martial Race ideology was an amalgam of three elements: an emphasis on environment (i.e. people of cold hilly areas were warriors), an emphasis on physical qualities (muscular people made good soldiers), and an emphasis on behavioural characteristics (particular martial groups had special aptitudes). These three strands were connected with the growth of Victorian geology, anthropology and eugenics.

The colonial army had an internal value system; the Martial Race ideology which shaped the army officers' view about the recruits. Richard G. Fox, an anthropologist, shows that this value system spilled into Punjabi society.³⁰ But Michael Hutt shows that Nepali society evolved a separate value system in opposition to the army's recruitment rhetoric.³¹ Hutt breaks new ground in constructing the Nepali perception of the Gurkhas from 20th century Nepali literature. Nepali prose depicts the

²⁸ Lionel Caplan, "Bravest of the Brave": Representations of "The Gurkha" in British Military Writings', *MAS*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1991), pp. 571-97.

²⁹ Pradeep Barua, 'Inventing Race: The British and India's Martial Races', *Historian*, vol. 58, no.1 (1995), pp. 107-16.

³⁰ Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (New Delhi, 1990).

³¹ Michael Hutt, 'A Hero or Traitor? The Gurkha Soldier in Nepali Literature', in David Arnold and Peter Robb (eds), *Institutions and Ideologies* (London, 1993), pp. 91-103.

Gurkhas as drunkards and rogues. Hutt points out the hard realities, which gave rise to such images. The soldiers were carriers of disease. Moreover the literati were Nationalist-Marxist. So they hated the mercenaries in imperial service.

Let us sum up the contours of historiography on the Martial Race theory. Those who try to link up the Martial Race ideology with British India's recruitment strategy, diplomacy and demography, throw light on the structures and processes involved in acquiring military labourers while the 'History of Ideas' perspective addresses the experiences and perceptions of the recruits. On the basis of their methodological formulations, the scholars can be divided into two groups. While Cohen, Enloe, Ellinwood and Fox use an inter-disciplinary approach, Saxena, Mason and Omissi are more historical in their approach. The second group's methodology could be termed as 'interpretative empiricism' since their works are based on rich historical data and are analytical, but have no direct influence of theories churned out by other disciplines. Their approaches differ greatly. Mason's book is an account by an official of the colonial state. Cohen and Omissi link up recruitment with the Raj's politics. Finally, Barua's work represents a paradigm shift as he fuses the colonial enlistment strategy with the evolution of the Western concept of race.

As regards the role of the caste system in shaping the Martial Race ideology, we have two opposite interpretations. Kolff argues that the castes were fluid categories and byproducts of military service. But Enloe and Ellinwood argue that castes had fixed boundaries and were not a colonial construct. Hence the caste system was one of the building blocks of the imperial ethnic game. The latter group's argument is more reliable because the British perceived the Indian society as divided along caste lines.

This is evident from the army's internal documents.³²

Then how alien was the Martial Race ideology? While authors like Mason, Enloe and Ellinwood argue that the Martial Race theory had an indigenous base, others like Chaudhuri, Saxena and Barua point out that the Martial Race theory was an alien project on the Indian soil. For Saxena and Chaudhuri, the causative factor behind shaping the imperial discourse lay in the periphery, in the imperial necessity to divide the colonized. But for Barua the principal imperative behind the British theoretical model was in the metropole: the evolution of pseudo-sciences in the West.

Scholars working on the Indian Army are generally shy of broad thematic patterns. The only exception is Kolff. Both Perry and Kolff remind us of Malthus by bringing demography into the orbit of history. While Kolff is for a direct linkage between demography and the architecture of the militaries, Perry's framework is more nuanced as he links up the demographic factor with the limitations of state power.

Faction fights within the colonial polity influenced the rise and fall of the different recruitment ideologies at various moments of time. Since Namierism is unfashionable nowadays, factional struggles within the army are neglected. The victory of a particular faction, by itself a micro phenomenon, occasionally had a macro effect. Ideas emerge over a long period, but when and how a particular organization (in this case the colonial army) accepted the dominant intellectual trend, depended on internal factors such as faction fights within the war machine. The issue of which communities were martial rocked the army only with the emergence of Roberts and his coterie towards the end of the 19th century. Once they were in power they propagated the

³² The army officers' conception of the caste system can be deduced from Caste returns, circular no. 4495, Adjutant's General's office, Simla, 14 Aug. 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2, N.A.I.

Martial Race ideology. But their theory was not a complete break with the past. They absorbed several trends, which had evolved over the first half of 19th century. Chapter 1 addresses this issue.

Those who are working on the Indian Army assume that army history by itself is unimportant and if at all any aspect of the army is to be studied then it must have a connection with the general non-military aspects. They have assumed that just because ethnography, anthropometry and phrenology were in currency in late 19th century Britain and India, only the Martial Race ideology, which borrowed from these strands, is important and needs to be studied. So these scholars, in their eagerness to link up recruitment ideology with the prevailing social and intellectual mores of the second half of the 19th century, have neglected the presence of a body of ideas which continuously challenged the Martial Race ideology. I term this ideology, which was the polar opposite of the Martial Race ideology, as the Anti-Martial Race theory and chapter 2 deals with it. Another group of officers tried to accommodate some elements of the critique provided by the Anti-Martial Race lobby, and was in turn influenced by the wider intellectual currents. This interrelationship between the military recruitment and the broader intellectual fashions is studied in chapter 3.

II

Command Mechanism Revisited

Once the recruits joined the imperial war machine, they were conditioned into soldiers. How the army not only attracted the personnel, but also retained them and motivated them to fight the imperial wars, and prevented mutinies, is a problematic I term as the command

mechanism.³³

Most of the literature emphasizes the sahib-sepoy interaction. Amiya Barat in her monograph claims that the paralysis of the command structure in the 1850s was due to the qualitative and quantitative decline of the British officers in the sepoy regiments of the Bengal Army.³⁴ What functions exactly did the white officers perform?

Patron-Client Relationship

A particular group of scholars view the white officer corps as the fountain of all patronage for the Indian soldiers. Mason writes that the officer-soldier relationship in the Indian army was a sort of father-son relationship. This was possible because of the inborn leadership quality of the British landed gentry who constituted the officer corps, and their public school training.³⁵ What Mason overlooks is that the officer corps of the Sepoy Army came from the middle class of Britain.³⁶

Cohen interprets the sahib-sepoy relationship as a dependent tie, which was one sided.³⁷ His seems to be a core-periphery model, in which the British officers constituted the core and the Indian personnel symbolized the periphery. Cohen derives

³³ For an exhaustive analysis of the literature on command mechanism see Kaushik Roy, 'The Historiography of the Colonial Indian Army', *SIH*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1996), pp. 255-66.

³⁴ Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry: Its Organisation and Discipline* (Calcutta, 1962).

³⁵ Mason, *A Matter of Honour*.

³⁶ T. A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822-1922* (London, 1974), pp. 123-24, 141.

³⁷ Cohen, *Indian Army*, pp. 49-50.

his model from the Western theoreticians like E.E Hagen and O. Mannoni. For Cohen, the Indians, in return for a position in the colonial system, gave their obedience to the sahibs.

Lorenzo M. Crowell elaborates and modifies Cohen's line of analysis by conceptualizing a sort of colonial professionalism among the white officer corps. The elements of colonial professionalism were caring for the Indian troops' religious and cultural sensibilities, and the officers' command over the vernaculars.³⁸ By these techniques, the officers acquired the sepoys' affection and loyalty. While Crowell focuses on the early 19th century Madras Army, the Canadian historian Douglas M. Peers shifts the limelight to the pre 1857 Bengal Army.³⁹ He asserts that the Bengal Army's British officers lost command over their troops' language and this was a vital factor in the disintegration of the loyalty mechanism in 1857. Even for the early 20th century, Edwin Latter regarded the personal loyalty of the troops towards their officers as the key factor in the functioning of the Indian Army.⁴⁰

Cultural Determinist Framework

Another approach, as followed by the American historian Jeffrey Greenhut, assumes

³⁸ Lorenzo M. Crowell, 'Military Professionalism in a Colonial Context: The Madras Army circa 1832', *MAS*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1990), pp. 249-74.

³⁹ Douglas M. Peers, "'The Habitual Nobility of Being': British Officers and the Social Construction of the Bengal Army in the Early Nineteenth Century", *MAS*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1991), pp. 545-69.

⁴⁰ Edwin Latter, 'The Indian Army in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918', *JSAHR*, vol. LXXII, no. 291 (1994), pp. 160-73.

that the visions and the responses of both the partners- the sahibs and the sepoys- were shaped within the frame of their distinct cultural paradigms. Greenhut writes that the sahibs functioned, not as representatives of Victorian paternal liberalism, but as bridges between the subcontinent's ruralites and the Western military system. The officer-soldier relationship was actually an amalgam of horizontal and hierarchical relationships. The British officers believed that their actions would provoke equivalent reactions from the soldiers. The Indian peasants who joined the army believed in hierarchical relations; they regarded it as their *dharma* to obey their superiors, the officers.⁴¹

To conclude, Cohen's attempt to explain collaboration between the white men and the brown soldiers with the aid of theoretical insights unnecessarily complicates the issue. Finally, Greenhut overemphasizes the role of the social and cultural milieu in influencing the officer-soldier interaction. Recently, to explain the sepoys' loyalty, Omissi has brought in two more additional factors-the Commander-in-Chief and the King Emperor.⁴²

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178432 While constructing their colonial military forces the British introduced a new organizational gamut from Europe. This organizational format experienced continuous intercourse with the colonial scenario, thus giving birth to a unique colonial military system. However all the scholars view the Indian Army's command system in terms of

⁴¹ Jeffrey Greenhut, 'The Imperial Reserve: The Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914-15', *JICH*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1983), pp. 54-73, 'Sahib and Sepoy: An Inquiry into the Relationship between the British Officers and Native Soldiers of the British Indian Army, *Military Affairs*, vol. XLVIII, no. 1 (1984), pp. 15-19.

⁴² Omissi, *Sepoy and the Raj*.

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a personalized sahib-sepoy relationship and overlook the structural apparatus of control. For the first time in Indian history, the colonial army offered a welfare package, which included both tangible and non-tangible incentives geared for purchasing its personnels' loyalty. Chapter 4 discusses this theme. Further, the British replaced the mansabdari organization with the regimental organization. This European institution absorbed a corpus of indigenous traits like the caste and clan ethos and mutated into a new entity, which was aimed to produce regimental loyalty among the personnel of the colonial war machine. This is the theme of chapter 5. Some amount of coercion in the form of military laws and the court martial apparatus was also necessary for the proper functioning of the command structure. Chapter 6 and 7 show the role of force in preventing insubordination among the soldiers.

The colonial army was always engaged in combat: either in great battles or in subconventional conflicts. The British withdrawal from the east of Suez was linked with loss of imperial control over the subcontinent's military force. Here lies the importance of the military establishment of India. The proper understanding of British India would be possible, only when the armed sepoy and the sowars will occupy the center of the historical canvas. Without them there would have been no colonialism, at least not the one which the Indians experienced. So far as colonial India is concerned, Clio should no more neglect Mars.

Chapter 1

The Evolution of the Martial Race Theory

The British-Indian Army was the strongest land force in the subcontinent. Except for its officer corps, the army was composed of Indians. Compared with the vast demographic resources of India, the army's demand for manpower remained limited. This allowed the British to decide which groups to enlist and on what basis. Their varying perceptions of the loyalty and courage of the different groups shaped recruitment.

Scholars like Stephen P. Cohen argue that the Martial Race ideology which held that only particular groups like the Sikhs and the Jats had the right qualities to produce soldiers moulded the army's recruitment pattern from the late 19th century onwards. The Martial Race doctrine was viewed as a monolithic, unchanging and coherent ideology, which suddenly flowered in the 1880s.¹

I

However, some historians argue that the core of the Martial Race ideology demanded that tall and fair men from north of river Narmada were warriors and this idea was prevalent even before 1857 especially in the Bengal Army.² But these scholars do not develop this point.

¹ Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (1971, reprint, New Delhi, 1974), pp. 32-56.

² Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour; An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (1974, reprint, DehraDun, 1988), pp. 20-24, 344-61; David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army*,

The policy makers of the pre 1857 Bengal Army, whom I term the 'Bengal School', assumed that only tall wheat eating peasants produced good soldiers. They believed that good warriors came from the families of enterprising agriculturists who cultivated their own lands. Yeomen farmers were believed to be healthy, hard working and sturdy. Robert Orme, one of the historians of the Company, first propounded this view. High castes were regarded as famous for orderly conduct, subordinate to all superior authority as a habit and faithful to their salt. Low castes and urban occupational groups such as city artisans were rejected, as they lacked the qualifications demanded by the Bengal School. Brahmins and Rajputs from Bihar and Awadh were mostly enlisted: they were the Purbiyas of the Bengal Army. They were preferred because they ate wheat and came from families owning some land, and they were described as zamindars or yeomen peasants by the British officers. Moreover they were tall: all the recruits to the Bengal Army had to be 5'7" tall.³ The Governor

1860-1940 (London, 1994), pp. 1-45; Douglas M. Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in India, 1819-1835* (London, 1995), p. 88.

³ Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry; Its Organisation and Discipline, 1796-1852* (Calcutta, 1962), pp. 120-26, 129; K.M.L. Saxena, *The Military System of India, 1850-1900* (New Delhi, 1974), p. 13; Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company; Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (New Delhi, 1995), p. 77; Major George F. MacMunn, *Vignettes from Indian War* (1901, reprint, New Delhi, 1993), pp. 133, 141; Lieutenant F.G. Cardew, *A Sketch of the Bengal Native Army to the Year 1895* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1971), p. 54; James Lunt (ed), *From Sepoy to Subedar: Being the Life and Adventure of Sita Ram, a Native officer of the Bengal Army Written and Related by Himself* (1970, reprint, London, 1988), pp. 3-4; Durgadas Bandopadhyaya, *Bidrohe Bengali* (Bengali), (1924, reprint, Calcutta, 1985), pp. 12, 16, 51, 57; *Supplementary report*, pp. 27, 308, 310.

General William Bentinck asserted that the north Indian high castes due to their better stature were bolder and more martial than the Madrassis.⁴

James W. Hoover writes that the historians' assumption that the Bengal Army being filled with high caste zamindars' sons from Purab is erroneous because numerically the Brahmin and Rajput zamindars of that area were inadequate for that purpose.⁵ Hoover's essay is an unnecessary piece of shadow boxing. He has misunderstood the meaning of the term Purab. This term denoted the region from Delhi upto Bihar and not merely southern Awadh as Hoover assumes. Actually the Bengal Army recruited Brahmins, Rajputs from the small peasant families and also the *Gwalahs* (a caste which was engaged in milking the cows) from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Moreover large numbers of north Indian Muslims joined the cavalry of the Bengal Army.⁶

Similar to the reasoning of the Bengal School, a trend existed in the pre 1857 Madras Army, which I label as the Selective Enlistment School. This lobby believed that martialness was the monopoly of certain groups. This idea was expressed in the military regulations of 1765, which confined recruitment to the Rajputs, Telugus and the Muslims. This lobby further believed that only members of certain occupations of the groups mentioned possessed soldiering instincts. Hence weavers were declared

⁴ Bentinck's minute on corporal punishment, 16 Feb. 1835, Bentinck's minute on military policy, 13 March 1835 in C.H. Philips (ed), *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, Governor General of India: 1828-1835*, vol. 2, 1832-1835 (Oxford, 1977), pp. 1429, 1431-32, 1445-46, 1451.

⁵ James W. Hoover, 'The Recruitment of the Bengal Army: Beyond the Myth of the Zamindar's Son', *Indo-British Review*, vol. 21, no. 2, (1996), pp. 144-56.

⁶ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 119-24, 150, 196, 211; Cardew, *Bengal Army*, pp. 54-57; *Supplementary report*, p. 27.

unfit for soldiering. Members of this School also harped on the physical features of the recruits. In 1795, Colonel Floyd declared that good recruits could not be obtained from the deep south, since this region produced men of small size, under the prescribed minimum height of 5'5". The conviction was that with the passage of time, the south Indians were deteriorating in size and looks, hence they could not become proper soldiers any more.⁷ This ideology also seeped among the civilian elites. Echoing Bentinck, H.T. Prinsep in 1835 claimed that the men from the Peninsula were deficient in bodily strength and mental energy and those men should be replaced by the Purbiyas who, because of their larger stature, were equal to the British soldier.⁸ Purbiyas were much sought after due to their superior physique and 'handsome' looks. In their absence, Telugus were recruited as they somewhat resembled the former. Tamils were not liked because to the British they looked like 'brute beasts'. The Indian Christians were regarded as dirty and alcoholic, hence they were looked down upon. And this trend continued in some of the regiments of the Madras Army till the 1880s.⁹

The Bengal School and the Selective Enlistment School both used the same indices for judging the recruits and reached the same conclusions. They held that a warlike spirit was confined to certain groups of particular areas. They liked to recruit a particular group from a particular region because they were convinced that heavy recruitment from a narrow area created military habits and ambitions and the

⁷ H.H. Dodwell, *Sepoy Recruitment in the Old Madras Army* (Calcutta, 1922), pp. 14, 33-36.

⁸ Minute by Prinsep, 9 June 1835, *Parliamentary papers* (1867), pp. 165-66.

⁹ Lieutenant Colonel F.W. Tyrrell, 'The Races of the Madras Army', *JUSII*, no. 18 (1881), pp. 11, 18, 20.

inhabitants then began to despise a peaceful life. Such people were then easily motivated to fight.¹⁰ The chief assumptions of these two camps were similar to the Martial Race ideology, which appeared in full bloom and percolated in four the regional armies (the Madras Army, the Bombay Army, the Bengal Army and the Punjab Frontier Force) when Field Marshal Lord Roberts became the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in 1885.¹¹ Roberts and his followers who were Major G.F. MacMunn, Colonel L.W. Shakespear, the commandant of the 2nd Gurkha Rifles just before the First World War, two Royal Artillery officers Lieutenant General W.H. Goodenough and Lieutenant Colonel J.C. Dalton, added some more criteria like climate and frontier but the basic paradigm remained same. Only the groups and the regions approved of changed with time. The Sikhs and Muslims of Punjab replaced the Purbiyas of north India.

II

All the ideologues of the Martial Race camp made a division between the Orient and the Occident. Roberts argued that in the Occident anyone could become a soldier, but in the Orient, due to its peculiar historical and ecological conditions, only some groups were suited for soldiering. He felt that people living in the northwest of India,

¹⁰ Anon, *The Armies of the Native States of India* (London, 1884), p. 23.

¹¹ Lieutenant General S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty First Century* (New Delhi, 1993), p. 534.

such as the Gurkhas, Sikhs, Dogras and the Pathans, were martial.¹² In a similar tone MacMunn declared, 'In Europe, as we know, every able bodied man, given food and arms, is a fighting man of some sort, in the East...certainly in India, this is not so'.¹³ MacMunn claimed that in the Orient only a few groups, could bear arms because the other communities lacked physical courage. He linked this up with the theory of the Aryan invasion. According to him, the Aryans invaded India, defeated the Dravidians, and occupied their lands. The Aryan descendants became the yeomen peasants and landowners of central and northern India; the landless labourers who migrated to the towns were the defeated Dravidians. The land owning and the cultivating groups, who were supposed to have been descended from the Aryans, he categorized as martial. These Aryans prevented the defeated other groups from bearing arms; as a result the non-Aryans lost their martial traditions. MacMunn warned his fellow officers that in India, for the foregoing reasons, the French practice of *levee en masse* or the British practice by which the rich pay and the poor fight was inapplicable.¹⁴

The Muslims and the Rajputs of Punjab were categorized as martial by MacMunn because they were regarded as descendants of the Central Asian Aryans, who occupied the land by driving out the original inhabitants. The 'martial Aryans' never indulged in trade, commerce and artisanal activities, or in pursuits, which

¹² Field Marshal Earl Roberts, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* (London, 1897, reprint, 1898), pp. 499, 530, 532-34; Brian Robson (ed), *Roberts in India: The Military Papers of Field Marshal Lord Roberts, 1876-1893* (Stroud, 1993), pp. 256-58, 263-66.

¹³ Major George F. MacMunn, *The Armies of India* (1911, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), p. 129.

¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 129-31; 'The Martial Races of India', *Army Review*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1911), reprinted in *The Punjab: Past and Present*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1970), pp. 73-75.

MacMunn said required brains. He labelled the groups following such occupations, especially business communities such as the Khattris and the educated Bengalis, as unmartial.¹⁵ Goodenough and Dalton also highlighted the linkage between agriculture and the warrior ethos. The Jats were fine agriculturists, so they were regarded as fine fighting materials.¹⁶

Certain cultural and physical attributes were ascribed on the 'warrior races'. For Roberts, Goodenough and Dalton, the martial communities were well built, smart, fair and handsome. They assumed that the martial Sikhs with excellent physiques were culturally conditioned for warfare.¹⁷ Roberts argued that they loved fighting and the excitement of war.¹⁸ Goodenough and Dalton also accepted that the martial peoples' hereditary profession was fighting and linked it up with their dietary practice. The Jats ate wheat and drank milk, so they were awarded the status of soldiers, while the Tamils were rejected because they ate rice.¹⁹

The role religion played in generating 'martialness' among the recruits was another facet of the Martial Race doctrine. MacMunn pointed out that the warlike instinct of the Sikhs was due to the militant faith of Guru Govind Singh and those Jats who accepted Sikhism became warriors due to the Calvinistic effect of the Gurus'

¹⁵ MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 129-32, 140-45, 155-56, 162-64; 'Martial Races', pp. 73, 76, 81-82.

¹⁶ Lieutenant General W.H. Goodenough and Lieutenant Colonel J.C. Dalton, *The Army Book for the British Empire: A Record of the Development and Present Composition of the Military Forces and their Duties during Peace and War* (London, 1893), p. 446.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 448; Roberts, *Forty One Years*, p. 530.

¹⁸ Robson, *Roberts in India*, p. 266.

¹⁹ Goodenough et. al. *Army Book*, pp. 448, 467.

teachings.²⁰ However long before MacMunn, a Scottish officer, W.L. McGregor, who fought in the Sikh wars claimed that the martial religion-Sikhism, transformed its followers into warriors.²¹

Roberts believed that climate and the frontier influenced the biological and sociological attributes of the inhabitants. He asserted that in the hot climate of India, even erstwhile warlike races rotted. Cold temperate regions produced better warriors than the hot tropics. As northwest India was colder than south and west India, Roberts felt that most of the martial races were located in that corner. Roberts also tried to introduce a connection between the existence of a frontier, mountainous region and the presence of martial traits. He wrote that a live frontier in the hilly region- one with warlike enemies present on the other side- kept alive the martial aptitudes, while long periods of peace, prosperity and security resulted in racial degeneration.²² In 1882 he wrote: 'The fact is that the Madras sepoy has never encountered a formidable enemy, and nearly 100 years of peace have almost quenched any martial spirit there may have been in him'.²³ Due to the presence of an open frontier, constant warfare was common in northwest India, hence, claimed Roberts, the Sikhs and the Pathans retained their

²⁰ MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 133-39; 'Martial Races', pp. 75-76.

²¹ W.L. McGregor, *The History of the Sikhs*, vol. 1 (1846, reprint, Allahabad, 1979), pp. 51, 54, 84-85, 88, 96, 165.

²² Roberts, *Forty One Years*, pp. 499, 530, 532, 534; Robson, *Roberts in India*, p. 264.

²³ Robson, *Roberts in India*, p. 264.

soldierlike attributes, while the Tamils and the Telugus had become unmartial due to continuous peace.²⁴

The medical opinion of colonial India somewhat supported Roberts' contention that the highlands nurtured healthy recruits. In 1928, Lieutenant Colonel W.C. Ross of the Indian Medical Service and then Director of Public Health in Bihar, stated that due to the attack of the hookworms, the people inhabiting the plains of India, especially the region around Bihar and Orissa, had become weak.²⁵ The army avoided these two provinces. And the military scenario strengthened Roberts' position that the northwest frontier bred warriors. Continuous 'butcher and bolt' sort of expeditions against the frontier tribesmen were going on along that region. Hence for the Indus tribals and the Punjabi soldiers of the Punjab Frontier Force guarding the frontier, this region provided realistic training in hill warfare. Deployment along the frontier was helpful for combat simulation and was much more superior than the parade ground training given to the Madras and most of the Bombay soldiers who were never deployed along the frontier.²⁶

The Martial Race ideologues tried to distinguish among various 'martial' groups. MacMunn tried to differentiate between the various 'martial' communities on the basis of their regional locations, physical and mental attributes, languages, social and cultural characteristics and religious sensibilities. MacMunn

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 257-58, 265-66; Roberts, *Forty One Years*, pp. 499, 532.

²⁵ *Royal commission on agriculture in India: Evidence taken in Bihar and Orissa*, vol. 13 (Calcutta, 1928), pp. 335-49.

²⁶ From Colonel John A.M. Macdonald, Secy. to Govt., Bombay Military department, to Colonel H.K. Burne, Military department, Simla, Progs. no. 721, 28 Oct. 1878, M.D.P. March 1879, N.A.I.

differentiated the Sikhs of central Punjab with long hair and curled beards from the Pathans who had a 'Jewish' appearance. Further, he believed that the Sikhs were slow witted but doggedly courageous, while the Pathans were characterized by their irresponsible manners.²⁷

The spokesmen of the Martial Race ideology used history to justify their views. Roberts claimed:

I have been reading lately the history of the Madras army, and I cannot find any occasion on which its fighting qualities were ever severely tried... But a study of the campaigns and battles which took place in the latter half of the eighteenth century proves conclusively that the brunt of fighting was always borne by the Europeans and that the casualties amongst the native troops were never very serious.²⁸

Roberts did not provide any figures to support his contention. A glance at the combat casualties suffered by the Madras regiments that fought against Mysore and the Marathas, goes against Roberts' verdict. In the action before Bangalore on March 1791 and at the battle of Assaye the Madras units suffered considerable losses.²⁹ Probably Roberts' plan was to delegitimize the Madrassis and to replace them with the Sikhs and the Gurkhas.

Why did the proponents of the Martial Race ideology consider the Sikhs, Pathans and the Gurkhas to be martial vis a vis the Madrassis? The lacklustre performance of the Company's Indian troops in the Terai during the Nepal War (1814-15), in the swampy jungles during the First Burma War and in the hot plains of Punjab during the two Sikh Wars on the one hand, and the gallant resistance by

²⁷ MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 133-40, 145-54; 'Martial Races', pp. 75-80.

²⁸ Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 263-64.

²⁹ Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Wilson, *Historical Record of the Fourth Prince of Wales' Own Regiment Madras Light Cavalry* (Madras, 1877), Appendix A and B, pp. 89-90.

the Gurkhas and the Sikhs against the Company's forces on the other hand, convinced the British officers about the combat capabilities of the two latter groups. What the British forgot was that the two war winning cards of the Company's Army-the horse artillery and the heavy cavalry were not of much use in the hilly terrain of Nepal and the northwest frontier. Again the Company's Indian soldiers were not trained in jungle warfare in which the Burmese excelled, and the white officer corps was to be blamed for this deficiency. The Raj's sepoys line tactics, which were well suited to combat in the plains, proved useless in the hills. In mountain warfare skirmishing was vital and the Pathans and the Gurkhas were masters of this craft because of their acquaintance with the terrain from the childhood. These two groups were physically and psychologically adapted to cold and rain at a high altitude. During the two Sikh Wars, the Company utilized some Gurkhas. Observing their actions, Sergeant Pearman, an Irishman, who was in the Company's force, described the Gurkhas as 'a fearless brave mountainous race' and was for increasing their intake. Charles Napier and Brian Hodgson demanded the enlistment of the Gurkhas; the highlander soldiers according to their perceptions.³⁰

³⁰ Colonel W.G. Hamilton, 'Ochterlony's Campaign in the Simla Hills', *JUSII*, no. 187(1912), pp. 137-56, 'Ochterlony's Campaign in the Simla Hills-Some Further Notes on', *JUSII*, vol. XLI, no. 189 (1912), pp. 455-58; Colonel L.W. Shakespear, 'The War with Nepal: Operations in Sirmoor', *JUSII*, vol. XLII, no. 193 (1913), pp. 369-79; Lieutenant Colonel H.M. Sinclair, 'The First Sikh War, 1845-1846', *JUSII*, vol. 28, no. 134(1899), pp. 1-24; Cardew, *Bengal Native Army*, pp. 146, 148, 150, 210; Captain Eden Vansittart, *The Gurkhas* (1890, reprint, New Delhi, 1980), pp. 34-35, 40-41; Marquess of Anglesey (ed), *Sergeant Pearman's Memoirs* (London, 1968), p. 54; John Pemble, *The Invasion of Nepal; John Company at War* (Oxford, 1971) pp. 134-339; George Bruce, *The Burma Wars, 1824-1886* (London, 1973); Clive Dewey, 'Racism and Realism: The Theory of Martial Castes', Unpublished paper, University of Leicester.

C. Enloe asserts that the political dependability of the recruits was the chief criterion of the Martial Race ideology.³¹ From the above discussion it is clear that Enloe's view is a bit mechanical. She neglects the religious and cultural elements of the military reality, which went into the making of this complex theory. Further Roberts, the father figure of the Martial Race ideology, argued that combat efficiency was more vital than the political reliability of the groups joining the army. Roberts claimed that some groups like the Pathans were martial but not necessarily loyal; but some like the Sikhs were both loyal and had warrior traits. He was for limited enlistment of the quasi-loyal martial groups like the Pathans. But he was never for the induction of the groups, which he considered loyal, but unwarlike: the Madrassis.³² And MacMunn never raised the question of the political reliability of the recruits.³³

The Martial Race doctrine was a complex alloy of different elements. One element was the Bengal School's recruitment doctrine. The other strand was introduced by the Roberts' caucus towards the end of the 19th century. The linkage between martial qualities and the social and occupational backgrounds were present in the Bengal School's enlistment doctrine. This line was pursued vigorously by the Martial Race ideologues. The physical and dietary criteria of the

³¹ Cynthia H. Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers: State Security in Divided Societies* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1980), pp. 23-49.

³² Roberts, *Forty One Years*, pp. 349, 352; Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 34-36, 40-45, 196, 263-66, 317, 392-94.

³³ MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 129-72, 'The Martial Races', pp. 261-71.

Bengal School were also tainted by the high priests of the Martial Race camp. The well built agricultural races remained the best soldiers. Why this preference for the small farmers? In general India was an agrarian economy and most of the people were living in the countryside. The army found that many of the people from the agricultural backgrounds were undernourished. So the army preferred the landowning peasants, who at least did not suffer from the adverse effects of malnutrition. The officers saw that when even the soldiers and the reservists remained in the villages for a long period, they fell ill due to undernourishment. The imperial belief was that the urban people were seditious and the cities were the storehouse of diseases due to backward sanitary conditions. The officers were convinced that the cities with their filthy bazaars and the temptations they offered to the 'natives' resulted in venereal diseases. The Bengali politicians from the secret societies influenced the regiments stationed in Calcutta and the 16th Jat Regiment, when deployed at Kanpur in 1904, came under the influence of the Arya Samaj. As a result many soldiers had to face court martial and then discharged.³⁴ Hence the army looked down upon occupations, which involved going to the cities and which they conceived required brains. They were probably afraid that the inclusion of too many politically educated people might result in the disintegration of the British authority. In contemporary Europe also there was a general belief that the peasants possessed good physiques and, being simpler, were much more

³⁴ *Army committee*, vol. 3, pp. 647, 677; Proceedings of a special committee assembled at Allahabad by order of Brigadier Fordyce on 10th July to take into consideration and report upon the revision of the cantonment, Progs. no. 12, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

malleable compared with the urban underemployed.³⁵ Roberts emphasis on ecology was a factor, which was absent in the discourse of the Bengal School. Thus the Martial Race ideologues modified, elaborated and revived the Bengal School's image of model soldiers.

III

Under the superficial unity, which the Martial Race ideology displayed, there existed several fault lines. David Arnold rightly asserts that the Martial Race ideology was a bundle of contradictory ideas but he does not develop this point.³⁶ All the scholars have treated this ideology as somewhat frozen in time. Hence they have missed out the changes, which the Martial Race theory underwent with time.

In the 1890s Roberts, Goodenough and Dalton emphasized the outward appearance of the martial groups. In 1911 MacMunn challenged this linkage between physical attributes and soldiering. He had written:

It is absurd that the great, merry, powerful Kashmiri should have not an ounce of physical courage in his constitution, but it is so. Nor are appearances of any use as a criterion. Some of the manliest looking people in India are in this respect the most despicable.³⁷

The Bengal School and some members of its lineal descendant, the Martial Race lobby were obsessed with height. It is to be noted that the British Army was also

³⁵ V.G. Kiernan, 'Conscription and Society in Europe before the War of 1914-18', in M.R.D. Foot (ed), *War and Society; Historical Essays in Honour of J.R. Western, 1928-1971* (London, 1973), p.144.

³⁶ David Arnold, "'Criminal Tribes" and "Martial Races": Crime and Social Control in Colonial India', Unpublished Seminar paper, Postgraduate seminar, CCSH/ 84/5, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London.

³⁷ MacMunn, *The Armies*, p. 130.

obsessed with height. Only after suffering horrendous casualties in late 1914, for getting replacements quickly and in large numbers, was the height requirement lowered from 5'8" to 5'3".³⁸ In the Indian Army Colonel Shakespear challenged the criteria of height for inducting his favourites, the short Gurkhas.³⁹

The use or rather misuse of history by the theorists constitutes another issue. Both Roberts and MacMunn used history to justify their views but in different ways. Roberts used history negatively: to delegitimize some groups such as the Madrassis, by pointing out that they lacked martial traditions. MacMunn on the other hand used history positively: to prove that some communities had brilliant fighting records and hence they were warlike. The Jats, in his eyes, appeared to be warlike because they fought very well against General Lake's besieging army during the siege of Bharatpur fort.⁴⁰

Generally all the theorists agreed that the martial groups in India were, at their best, the equals of the British soldiers. Before 1857, Hugh Gough, the British general who fought the Khalsa Army, glorified the Gurkhas and thus set the stage to MacMunn and Shakespear to admire them. Gough's view was that the Gurkhas could be compared with the elite British infantry, the grenadiers. But Shakespear in 1912 concurred that the Gurkhas were better than the British soldiers.⁴¹ This was

³⁸ Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918* (London, 1997), p. 119.

³⁹ Colonel L.W. Shakespear, *History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)*, vol. 1 (Aldershot, 1912), pp. 29, 37.

⁴⁰ MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 159-60.

⁴¹ Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, pp. 29, 37.

indeed a revolutionary statement as for the first and the last time, a British officer openly admitted that an Indian martial group was more capable than the white men.

While Roberts established a link between religion and disloyalty and applied it in the case of trans frontier Pathans, MacMunn argued that for the Sikhs, religion functioned as a force multiplier. Thus religion appeared as an important component of the corpus of ideas associated with Roberts' camp. Hence Cohen's argument that the Martial Race supporters underplayed the religious aspect of the martial groups⁴² is untenable.

The Martial Race ideologues attempted to classify and categorize the different 'military races' of the subcontinent. For such an elaborate programme, their analytical categories and the basis of their disaggregation remained ever fluctuating, which in the end produced a confusing picture. Peers argues that before the 1830s the British used the category caste for analyzing the composition of the army but gradual disillusionment with the Bengal Army's performance forced them to introduce a new analytical category; race.⁴³ In his monograph, Peers writes that caste was a tool for man management in the hands of the British officers. They assumed that each caste had its own characteristics, but there was some disagreement among the officers on those fundamental attributes. However in the later 19th century, this categorization became more systematic.⁴⁴ Omissi

⁴² Cohen, *Indian Army*, p. 49.

⁴³ Douglas M. Peers, "'The Habitual Nobility of Being': British Officers and the Social Construction of the Bengal Army in the Early Nineteenth Century", *MAS*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1991), pp. 545-46.

⁴⁴ Douglas M. Peers, *Mars and Mammon*, p. 3.

writes that the term 'martial races' was used consistently till the early 20th century when it gave way to martial classes.⁴⁵ We will see that the term race, caste and class were used arbitrarily between 1859 and 1913 and there was disagreement about the particular characteristics of these terms.

In his autobiography Roberts used the terms race, caste and class interchangeably while referring to the Sikhs and the Gurkhas.⁴⁶ In his correspondence during 1878 he described these two groups as classes but in 1882 he described them as hardier races.⁴⁷ MacMunn also used these categories indiscriminately. He described the Pathans as a race that was divided into many tribes, which in turn were further subdivided into clans. But for him the Pathans were also a class.⁴⁸

IV

Geostrategic considerations, political factors and personalities interacted constantly to influence the rise and fall of the Martial Race doctrine at various moments of time. Before 1857, the colonial armies were used against the indigenous powers of the subcontinent. The strategic threat centres for the Company shifted to north India in the early 19th century. This aided the expansion of the Bengal Army. As

⁴⁵ Omissi, *Sepoy and the Raj*, p. 43.

⁴⁶ Roberts, *Forty One Years*, pp. 534, 540.

⁴⁷ Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 34-36, 256-59.

⁴⁸ MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 145-54.

the zone of operation was nearest to it, it saved time and transportation costs to deploy the Bengal Army. The continuous success of the Bengal Army also resulted in the acceptance of its recruitment ideology. The Bombay Army could not enlist the Marathas because they remained enemies of the British till the second decade of the 19th century. Since south India was already pacified, and after the last decade of the 18th century no big war occurred in that region, the Madras Army did not experience any large scale operations. This resulted in the decline of its status.⁴⁹ Hence the Bengal School remained dominant and its star continued to rise till the fatal Sunday of 1857 when the Pandies turned their muskets against their white masters.

Several factors ensured the decline of the Bengal School, the precursor of the Martial Race ideology after 1857. By 1856, the size of the Indian Army, including the regulars and the irregulars was 250,000 men and out of them about 120,000 personnel came from north India.⁵⁰ The Bengal School's policy of depending on the Purbiyas was proved wrong by a series of incidents, which started on 10th May 1857 and finally culminated in the Bengal Army's ruin. The Purbiyas conducted most of the Mutiny. Other factors also downgraded them in the eyes of the military establishment. From 1860 onwards, successive Secretaries of State demanded that the Indian units be deployed along the imperial outposts in Afro-Asia for policing duties. Charles Wood was one Secretary of State, who

⁴⁹ Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, pp. 5-80, 145, 147, 150; V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army, 1600-1974* (New Delhi, 1974), pp. 14-54; Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, pp. 29-34, 75-110; Cardew, *Bengal Native Army*, pp. 128-36; *Supplementary report*, p. 45.

⁵⁰ General George Chesney, *Indian Polity: A View of the System of Administration in India* (1894, reprint, New Delhi, 1976) pp. 221, 224, 236, 239.

demanding the Indian units for overseas duties⁵¹ The Purbiyas, due to their rituals and customs, were unwilling to cross the *kalapani*, whereas the Sikhs and the Gurkhas had no such problems. In fact the introduction of the General Enlistment Act in 1856, which stated that soldiers were liable to serve anywhere, provoked the Purbiyas to rebel.⁵²

By the 1880s the situation again turned in favour of the Martial Race spokesmen. With the passage of time, the memory of the 1857 Mutiny receded and in the official mind the external threat replaced the internal threat, which declined due to the development of the telegraph and the railways. The authorities felt confident of quickly concentrating forces to crush internal uprisings. So the army thought that the policy of maintaining four different armies recruited from all over India could be done away with. The external threats were of two types: raids by the frontier tribes, and fear of a Russian-sponsored Afghan expedition. The Indian Army was geared to launch repeated expeditions against the northwest frontier tribals. Delhi became a pawn in the 'Great Game' between London and St. Petersburg. The military calculated that to retreat inside India before the advancing invaders would cause an uprising of the Indians, especially among the Muslims. So the generals decided to maintain an advance frontier line in Afghanistan till reinforcements from Britain could arrive. Local and provincial battalions were found unwilling to serve away from their homes for long periods. Roberts argued

⁵¹ From Charles Wood to the Governor General, no. 58, para2, no. 1159, Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State, vol. 1, part 1, 1860, N.A.I.

⁵² Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green*, p. 78.

that due to the very nature of their isolation, such units' combat effectiveness tended to decline. This meant that most of the recruits needed to be raised from the area around the operational zone, which meant northwest India because if the regiments' recruiting grounds were far away from their area of deployment, then it would take a long time to supply manpower to replace the casualties.⁵³

The aversion of the Madrassis to serving in Burma and in the northwest frontier, because of the climate and high cost of rice, reduced the prestige of this group in the army's eyes. Burma experienced high rainfall and the unacclimatized Madrassis and the Purbiyas fell ill in large numbers. Moreover, the Madras troops' families normally lived with them. The Madrassis were unwilling to leave their families and perform garrison duty in Burma. The army found out that transporting the families of the troops along with the regiments to their area of deployment to be very costly. For all these reasons, Lord Napier was against using the Madrassis during the Lushai expedition in 1871.⁵⁴

The intrigues and charisma of Field Marshal Roberts also aided in the victory of the Martial Race lobby. Roberts contacted many influential personalities both inside and outside India, formally and informally. Brigadier General Charles George Arbuthnot commanded some units in Afghanistan during the Second

⁵³ Pierce G. Fredericks, *The Sepoy and the Cossacks* (London, 1972); Cardew, *Bengal Native Army*, pp. 345-75, 380-81, 412-25; Roberts, *Forty One Years*, pp. 231-34, 499, 503, 505, 530-535; Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 207, 349-50, 352-53; St. John Brodrick, Secretary of State, to Lord Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1902-1909), 25 April 1904, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, to Kitchener, 21 Aug. 1900, Roberts to Kitchener, 27 March 1903, 13 April 1904, Kitchener papers, Reel no.2, M/F, N.A.I.

⁵⁴ *Eden commission*, Ch. 7, pp. 82-83.

Afghan War. He was assured by Roberts of the 'cowardliness' of the Madrassis. Roberts also got in touch with the powerful military bureaucrats. He informed the Adjutant General of India in 1878 about the 'unmartial' character of the Bombay Army and the presence of the 'warlike races' around the northwestern corner of India. In 1890, George Chesney, the Military Member of Viceroy's Council, came to know about the combatworthiness of the Punjabis from Roberts. An influential figure Major General Martin Dillon, the Assistant Military Secretary responsible for India, to the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, the Duke of Cambridge in London was told about the 'fearless' Gurkhas by Roberts. Dillon was requested by Roberts to present the latter's view in front of the Duke, the most powerful military man in the British empire.⁵⁵

Roberts also contacted many powerful civilians. During the Second Afghan War, Roberts wrote to the Viceroy about the excellent performance of the Gurkhas against the Kurram tribes. Later, as the war was drawing to a close, he warned the Viceroy about Major General H.W. Norman, the Military Member of the Viceroy's Council and General Donald Stewart, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1881 to 1885. Norman was for limited induction of the Punjabis but Roberts was for total Punjabization of the army. As neither Norman nor Stewart shared Roberts' rosy views about the 'martial' groups, he regarded them as enemies. Roberts also privately contacted one influential British politician, the Conservative M.P. Lord Randolph Churchill, and informed him about the

⁵⁵ Cardew, *Bengal Native Army*, pp. 349, 364, 369; Roberts to Arbuthnot, 6 April 1889, Roberts to the Adjutant General in India, 16 Dec. 1878, 24 Dec. 1878, 30 July 1880, 18 Sept. 1880, Roberts to Dillon, 7 Feb. 1879, Roberts to Chesney, 4 Dec. 1890 in Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 40-45, 64, 68, 205-06, 220-22, 392-93.

‘disastrous’ performance of the Madrassis in Burma. In one of his despatches, Roberts urged Churchill to accept the post of Secretary of State of India, in the case of a Conservative victory in Britain. Only then, he claimed, would it be possible to fill the Madras and the Bombay armies with the Sikhs and the Gurkhas.⁵⁶

Very few people dared to challenge Roberts, the most distinguished field commander of the day. But some hit back. When Roberts informed Stewart about the utter incapacity of the Bombay and the Madras soldiers to take part in overseas operations or to fight in Central Asia, the latter disagreed. Stewart did not believe that the people of the Bombay and the Madras presidencies, which supplied the bulk of the personnel of these two regional armies, were morally or mentally inferior compared to the so called warlike races of northwestern India. Stewart pointed out that many officers were biased against the Hindustanis and were averse to recruit them. General Frederick Haines, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1876 to 1881, backed Stewart’s views.⁵⁷

However, Roberts’ voluminous correspondence bore fruit in the end. He won over important figures in the War Office at London. Major General Charles Brownlow, Assistant Military Secretary in the War Office, agreed with Roberts that the positive views of Lord Hardinge and Haines about the operational

⁵⁶ Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p. 534; Roberts to Viceroy, 14 Dec. 1878, 31 March 1880, Roberts to Churchill, Private, 15 April 1885, 1 Feb. 1886 in Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 38-39, 181-82, 317, 338-41; Memorandum on the subject of our policy with Central Asia, 5 Oct. 1867, Memorandum on the occupation of Herat, 7 June 1875, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

⁵⁷ Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p. 534; Roberts to Stewart, 3 June 1882, Stewart to Roberts, 6 July and 3 Aug. 1882 in Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 256-59, 260-61, 263-67.

capabilities of the Bombay and the Madras armies amounted to nonsense. Brownlow agreed with Roberts' view on demobilizing the Hindustanis and the Deccanis. Powerful civilians such as Lord Dufferin supported Roberts.⁵⁸

The Martial Race lobby knew that the distance between victory and defeat was marginal indeed. When Roberts was the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army (1881-1885), there was a chance that he might be appointed as the Adjutant General in Britain (he was interested in that post) and the post of the Commander-in-Chief in India would go to Lord Wolseley. But the latter was not appointed because London feared that Wolseley being a 'hawk' would start a war with the 'Bear' immediately after coming to India. The Queen and the Duke of Cambridge wanted to appoint the Duke of Connaught as Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, but Salisbury's cabinet opposed this proposal.⁵⁹ Roberts was also lucky in that when he moved to the centre stage of the Indian Army, the opponents of Punjabization were on their way out. G.F. Hamilton, the Secretary of State, pointed out that had Stewart been in the office for a little longer, then the rise of the Martial Race lobby would have been checked if not blocked completely. Stewart thoroughly opposed the cut in the recruitment of the Hindustani Muslims in the cavalry and the dominance of the Sikhs in the infantry. The appointment of

⁵⁸ Roberts, *Forty One Years*, p. 532; Charles Brownlow to Roberts, 20 June 1884 in Robson, *Roberts in India*, p. 297.

⁵⁹ Adrian Preston, 'Wolseley, The Khartoum Relief Expedition and the Defence of India', *JICH*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1978), pp. 254-80; Brownlow to Roberts, Napier to Roberts, 9 July 1885, 31 July 1885 in Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 234, 326, 447.

Kitchener and Curzon settled the issue. Both were admirers of Roberts' views as regards the 'martial races', and this is evident from their correspondence. Whatever might be the difference between the duo, they never disagreed on the issue of the 'martial races'. Both wanted to replace the Madrassis with the Gurkhas. The Martial Race lobby took great pains to keep its opponents out from the corridors of power. Hamilton conspired to keep Mansfield Clarke out of the post of the Military Member of the Viceroy's Council because the latter belonged to the Madras Army, and Hamilton feared that Clarke might obstruct the reduction of the Madras Army. If British military politics led to the appointment of Wolseley, then instead of Roberts' caucus, the 'Wolseley ring' would probably have ruled the Indian Army and its history would have been different.⁶⁰

The victory of Roberts' group was reflected in the actual social and regional composition of the Indian Army. Table 1 shows that in 1885 the social and geographical basis of the army was broad: The groups from north, south and northwest India joined in more or less equal proportions. The Martial Race lobby aimed at filling the army with particular groups from a narrow area. Between 1885 and 1912, the share of the Hindustanis and the Deccanis declined drastically. In the same period the proportion of the 'martial' groups: Sikhs, Garhwalis and the Gurkhas, increased proportionately. By 1912, the 'martial' groups from the northwest became as dominant as the Purbias were just before the 1857 Mutiny. Interestingly the share of the Purbias in 1857, and Roberts' favourite martial groups (Sikhs and the frontier Muslims) in 1912 was same-44%. The low castes'

⁶⁰ Hamilton to Curzon, 1 March 1900, 11 Oct. 1900, Hamilton papers, Reel no. 1, M/F, N.A.I.; Kitchener to Brodrick, 3 Dec. 1901, 12 March 1903, Kitchener papers, Reel no. 1.

share declined from 6.5% to 1.5%.⁶¹ In the long run there was a decline in the ritual status of the groups that entered the Indian Army in the late 19th century.⁶²

⁶¹ *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 156.

⁶² Unlike the Purbias, Roberts' martial communities were either outside the varna system or very low in the ritual hierarchy. So the sociologist A. Bopegamage's assertion that the Martial Race lobby favoured the high castes is erroneous. A. Bopegamage, 'Caste, Class and the Indian Military: A Study of the Social Origins of Indian Army Personnel', in Jacques Van Doorn (ed), *Military Profession and Military Regimes: Commitments and Conflicts* (The Hague, 1969), p. 145.

Table 1: Social and Regional Composition of the Indian Army

Regions	Groups	1857 %	1885 %	1912 %
North West Frontier Province and Punjab	Pathans, Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs	10	25 (4.5+6.5+14)	44 (7.5+16+20.5)
Himachal Pradesh and Nepal	Gurkhas, Garhwalis and Dogras	2.5	8 (5+3+0)	17.5 (11.5+5+1)
Haryana and Uttar Pradesh	Jats, other middle ranking Hindus and Low Castes	6.5	14	10
Western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana	Hindustani Muslims	18	17	6
North India (Bihar and Uttar Pradesh)	Purbiyas (Brahmins and Rajputs)	44	11 (5+6*)	9 (2+7*)
Maharashtra	Marathas	4	6	3
South India	Madrassis (Tamils, Telugus and South Indian Muslims)	15 (8+7)	19 (12+7)	10.5 (5+5.5)

*Including Rajputs from Rajasthan.

Sources: John Gaylor, *Sons of John Company: The Indian and Pakistan Armies 1903-91* (1992, reprint, New Delhi, 1993), pp. 174, 219-35; General George Chesney, *Indian Polity: A View of the System of Administration in India* (1894, reprint, New Delhi, 1976), pp. 215-16, 221, 264-65, 267; Lieutenant F.G. Cardew, *A Sketch of the Services of the Bengal Native Army to the Year 1895* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1971), pp. 456-59; *Peel committee*, Appendix nos. 17 and 22; *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 156.

As Roberts was a farsighted soldier, he probably understood the dangers posed by Punjabization in the long run. Hence his schizophrenic attempt to ascribe martial status to some frontier tribals along the Indo-Burmese border. He urged Kitchener to enlist them. Kitchener agreed to Roberts' proposal of using the Burmese frontier tribes as general purpose troops. But their unwillingness to join in large numbers, even in the local corps, wrecked Roberts' scheme. The Muslims of north India could have been a counterweight to the Sikhs, but anxious officers felt that Pan-Islamism might hamper the loyalty of the Muslim soldiers. Some officers believed that it was necessary to reduce the enlistment of the Muslims further, because if the Middle East politician Arabi Pasha declared a *jihad* against the British, then the Muslim sepoys of the Raj might turn their loaded rifles against the British.⁶³ The fear that the Muslims, though 'martial', were disloyal spread like an epidemic within the higher echelons. Hamilton warned Elgin not to use the 'disloyal Muslims' in the northwestern frontier. For this reason, Hamilton did not want any Muslim soldiers in the Chitral Expeditionary Force. In the end, Roberts became desperate. He understood where his own doctrine was leading his much loved Indian Army. His attempt to balance the 'martial' groups was in complete ruins. Like a drowning man clutching at a straw, he turned to Chesney to enquire about the possibility of using the 'martial' Zulus to balance the Punjabis.⁶⁴

⁶³ Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 64-68, 266-67, 350-51; Kitchener to Roberts, 4 Dec. 1904, 6 June 1904, Kitchener papers, Reel no. 2.

⁶⁴ Roberts to Chesney, 4 Dec. 1890 in Robson, *Roberts in India*, p. 404; Hamilton to Elgin, 10 Oct. 1895, Hamilton papers, Reel no.2.

Sikhs, Pathans, and the Punjabi Muslims from northwest India supplied the bulk of the army's recruits under the Martial Race gameplan. As evident from table 1, their share under the Martial Race lobby jumped from 25% to 44%. In 1885, when they had just taken over, the army drew only 19.5% of its personnel from Punjab, but by 1912 this proportion rose to 36%. In 1912, the army drew about 62% of its manpower from a narrow tract running from central Nepal to Peshawar. In 1912, at the eleventh hour when the army committee met, they realized that the Martial Race doctrine was indeed faulty because the army had become overdependent on a few groups from a narrow region. The Akali disturbances further unnerved them. The officers realized that the Sikhs had become 'swollen-headed', and demanded reduction in the entry of the Punjabis.⁶⁵ By then it was too late, as the Great War was coming.

Some long-term factors also operated, which aided the induction of the Purbiyas and the Sikhs. The Indian Army was generally deployed at the borders of the Indian empire, and after conquering the frontier enemies, the slow induction of the ex-enemies started. After the lapse of a certain period, the volume of recruitment of the ex-enemies rose. The frontier then advanced again, new frontier groups became favourites, and the old frontier groups were then sidelined. This was partly the product of cooption. After conquering the frontier enemies, the British officers also developed a healthy respect for these groups. The officers recognized their soldierlike qualities and created a literature about their martial activities, which generated interest about these groups and guided their enlistment in the military establishment. This process operated throughout the 19th century.

⁶⁵ *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, pp. 156-58.

In the last half of the 18th century, the Bengal Army was deployed along the frontiers of Awadh. The heavy enlistment of the Purbiyas in the Maratha regular infantry, then the most dangerous enemy of the Company, and the tough fight put up by these units made the British interested in enlisting them. And as the Awadh Nawab's army was reduced, the Purbiyas from the Nawabi force were coopted in the Company's Army. This partly explains the rise of the Bengal School. Between 1790 and 1830, the Bengal Army recruited the Purbiyas heavily. Later, in the 1840s, as the British frontier expanded to the Terai and to Punjab, the tough fight which the Gurkhas and the Sikhs gave heightened the admiration of the British for these communities. The British officers produced a prolific literature on them. The Gurkha and the Sikh recruits started trickling in, partly to absorb the disbanded Khalsa Army and the Nepal Army's soldiers. Some Sikh units were raised after the Sikh Wars. But due to lethargy and institutional inertia, the Purbiya dominance continued for some years. After 1857, as the disloyalty of the Purbiyas became apparent, the recruitment of the Sikhs and the Gurkhas increased slightly, but became massive in the last two decades of the 19th century, as the army was deployed along the northwest frontier.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ H.G. Keene, *Hindustan under Free Lances, 1770-1820: Sketches of Military Adventure in Hindustan during the period immediately preceding British Occupation* (London, 1907), p. 128; Lewis Ferdinand Smith, *A Sketch of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the Regular Corps Formed and Commanded by Europeans in the Service of Native Princes of India with Details of the Principal Events and Actions of the late Maratha War* (Calcutta, n.d.); McGregor, *History of the Sikhs*, vol. 2, pp. 30, 46-48, 50-51,

Conclusion

The propagandists of the Martial Race lobby conceived that the subcontinent was composed of various groups and tried to judge their martial capacities with the help of several criteria. The policy of the Martial Race spokesmen was to establish a special collaborative relationship with only some groups from definite areas. So their doctrine emphasized that soldierlike traits were the monopoly of only certain groups. The strategy of the Martial Race lobby was risky because it tried to fill most of the army with a particular group and if that specially favoured group rebelled, then all was lost. Before 1857, the army was dominated by the Purbiyas from north India and when they became disaffected, the result was the 1857 Mutiny. But the Raj, unlike the Bourbons, learnt nothing but forgot everything. Its army again became overdependent on a narrow area-Punjab. The Martial Race ideology, focusing on limited groups, could supply only limited manpower to the army. Hence this ideology was adequate as long as the Indian Army was engaged in 'small colonial wars' in which the regiments suffered small combat losses. But when the Indian Army was used in the First World War, it suffered huge manpower losses. At this critical juncture, the Martial Race ideology temporarily retreated.

63, 72, 77-78, 83-85, 88-89, 135, 139, 165-66, 262, 265-67; Cardew, *Bengal Native Army*, pp. 222, 225, 241, 259, 291-94, 302-03, 329-31, 408-10, 431; MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 174-86.

Chapter 2

The Voice of Dissent: The Rise of the Anti-Martial Race Ideology

There was a group, I label as the 'Anti-Martial Race School', which in reaction to the 1857 Mutiny chalked out policies that were diametrically opposed to those of the Martial Race theory. While the Martial Race theorists were for inducting only particular groups from a narrow tract of the subcontinent, their opponents proposed the broadening of the social and territorial bases of the army. In contradiction to the current historiographical consensus, I argue that the spokesmen of the 'martial races', from the last two decades of the 19th century onwards, did not have a complete monopoly over the army. There were challenging voices, which opposed the operation of the Martial Race ideology.

Standard works on the British Indian Army mainly focus on the Martial Race theory, thus neglecting the nuances of the Anti-Martial Race lobby's recruitment programme. K.M.L. Saxena's book is the only work, which focuses on the Indian Army's post 1857 recruitment policy.¹ He writes that to destroy nationalism in India, the imperialists balanced the Indian soldiers along various caste and religious lines. This is a mechanical interpretation of British policy. To search for national consciousness in the second half of 19th century is an anachronism. After all the different communities like the Brahmins, and the Sikhs possessed different languages, religions and cultures. So I agree with Cynthia H. Enloe that the ethnic cleavages in the Indian society were real. But while Enloe emphasizes the role of social division in the formulation of the Martial

¹ K.M.L. Saxena, *The Military System of India: 1850-1900* (New Delhi, 1974).

Races concept,² this chapter shows how the Raj systematically structured such differentiation in constructing the Balanced Recruitment formula. This recruitment strategy was the direct response to the challenge of preventing another mutiny in the Bengal Army, in the immediate aftermath of 1857. This enlistment policy accommodated and accentuated a sophisticated balancing structure by inducting various heterogeneous groups. David Omissi in his book states that the post 1859 Bengal Army's social composition was an intermixture of accident and a 'Divide and Rule' policy.³ This view is similar to Philip Mason's interpretation that the post Mutiny Bengal Army's composition was *ad hoc*.⁴ I argue that balanced recruitment, which was dominant between 1859 to 1880, was the end result of a detailed blueprint which emerged after hectic debates among the imperial elites.

I

The Evolution of the Balanced Recruitment Strategy

The core of the Balanced Recruitment principle could be traced back to the pre 1857 days. The doctrine which denied any linkage between the recruits' martial instincts and their socio-cultural and occupational backgrounds, heredity, diet and climate, evolved parallel to the Bengal School and the Selective Enlistment School. This Anti-Martial Race ideology operated both in the Bombay and the Madras armies. There was a lobby

² Cynthia H. Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers: State Security in Divided Societies* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1980), pp. 23-42.

³ David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London, 1994), pp. 6-10.

⁴ Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (1974, reprint, DehraDun, 1988), pp. 317-27.

in the Madras Army, which pursued what can be termed as an 'Open Door' policy as regards enlistment. In 1798, General Harris of the Madras Army challenged the Selective Enlistment School. Harris argued that though the south Indians were inferior in size and appearance compared with the Purbiyas, the former were hardy, thrifty and lacked religious prejudices. Thus the southerners made better soldiers than the Purbiyas. This doctrine also disregarded the criterion of height. Even in the prestigious cavalry regiments, men of very short size were taken. In 1839, the general orders of the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army laid down that Indians of all castes were eligible for recruitment. The Tamils of Trichinopoly, the Telugus of the northern Circars and the Muslims from Karnataka were enlisted to maintain a rough balance.⁵

The Bombay Army maintained a bipolar balance between the Hindustanis from north India and the Konkanis from western Maharashtra. In 1830, there were 10,015 Konkanis and 12,476 Hindustanis. Before the Third Maratha War, there were only 4000 Hindustanis in the Bombay Army. At that time a tripolar balance existed in the Bombay Army between the Hindustanis, Deccanis and the Konkanis. But during the war, extra manpower became necessary and the British were unwilling to recruit the Konkanis as many of their brethren were in the Peshwa's Army and had sympathy with the Maratha Confederacy. Hence the British turned towards the Hindustanis. By 1824, the numbers of the Hindustanis had jumped to 7465 men. John Malcolm warned Bentinck, the supporter of the Purbiyas, against further increasing the number of the Hindustanis as the balancing game would be upset. Malcolm concluded that the three presidency armies must have different social and regional compositions to prevent any unified combination

⁵ H.H. Dodwell, *Sepoy Recruitment in the Old Madras Army* (Calcutta, 1922), pp. 15-16, 37-38, 45-46; Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Wilson, *History of the Madras Army*, vol. 3 (Madras, 1883), p. 151.

against the British.⁶ A tripolar balance also existed in the Punjab Frontier Force. Just before the 1857 Mutiny, it had 14,692 Sikhs from central Punjab, 30,188 Muslims from Punjab and Western Uttar Pradesh and 7,566 Hindus of mixed castes like Ahirs and the Gujars from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.⁷

In the pre 1857 Madras and the Bombay armies, the Anti-Martial Race ideology scored a victory due to certain factors. Awadh and Bihar were under the jurisdiction of the Bengal Presidency, so the Bengal Army had the first choice in these areas. As a result, it monopolized the 'better' variety of Purbiya recruits leaving the 'second grade' materials for the other regional forces. Some Purbias who joined the Madras Army deserted because of the high cost of living in the Madras Presidency. The Bombay Army enlisted the Purbias from Mhow. Most of them joined with the aim of saving some money. After few years service, they deserted. The Punjab Frontier Force was deployed along the northwest frontier. The Purbias were not willing to serve in a hostile terrain so far away from their home.⁸ All these factors prevented a predominance of the Purbias in these armies, which in turn saved these forces from the blast of 1857.

The Anti-Martial Race theory existed in the first half of the 19th century. Why have scholars missed this point? Perhaps this is because their assumptions demand that military studies must contribute to the understanding of the broader issues. So those who have concentrated on the pre 1857 Indian Army are obsessed with linking the army's recruitment programme with the 'big event' - the 1857 Mutiny. 1857 was accepted by all

⁶ Minute by Malcolm, 27 Nov. 1830, *Parliamentary papers*, (1867), p. 175.

⁷ *Supplementary report*, p.4.

⁸ Dodwell, *Sepoy Recruitment*, pp. 15-16; *Supplementary report*, p. 46; Minute by Malcolm, *Parliamentary papers* (1867), pp. 175, 177.

the scholars as a landmark as regards the shift in the theory of recruitment policy. But they neglect that the Mutiny was no break as far as recruitment in the Bombay and Madras armies and the Punjab Frontier Force was concerned. These forces continued to absorb a motley collection of communities from a wide region, as they had done before 1857. They followed this policy till the 1880s. Scholars miss this point because they give the lion's share of attention to the Bengal Army, whose organization was in shreds in 1857. Eric Stokes implied that the sepoys were peasants in uniform. This encouraged historians to link the army's social composition with the agrarian uprising of 1857. As a result a simplistic picture emerged. The Bengal sepoys were seen to have rebelled because the high caste peasants of Awadh rebelled.⁹

There is a tendency among all the scholars¹⁰ who have worked on the pre 1857 Bengal Army to link the faulty British recruitment policy of enlisting the high castes with the 1857 uprising. So they introduce the notion of inevitability. This approach is consistent with the social scientists searching for long term structural factors especially as the role of chance is caricatured as the 'Cleopatra's nose' approach to history.¹¹ The Chaos theory influenced by Quantum mechanics argues for a more pluralistic approach.

⁹ C.A. Bayly (ed), Eric Stokes, *The Peasant Armed: The Indian Revolt of 1857* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 51, 66, 100-15.

¹⁰ Dirk H.A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 176-199; Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 49-92, 292-94; J.W. Hoover, 'The Recruitment of the Bengal Army: Beyond the Myth of the Zamindar's Son', *Indo-British Review*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1996), pp. 144-56.

¹¹ E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (1961, reprint, Harmondsworth, 1986), pp. 87-108.

In other words, Clio occasionally plays dice as the course of history is occasionally shaped by the contingent.¹² If the Bengal Army rejected its homogeneous recruitment policy in favour of the balancing strategies adopted by the other regional forces, then the ‘winds of madness’, which blew in May 1857 might have been averted.

In the summer of 1857, the Bengal Army disintegrated. This was one of the turning points in the history of the Indian Army. About 70,000 soldiers turned their muskets against their white masters and 30,000 troops of dubious loyalty deserted.¹³ This catastrophe triggered off a grand debate among the British about how best to construct a polyethnic army for the future. In the Mutiny’s aftermath, the imperialist’s opinions were divided. One group was for minimal trusting of the Indian military manpower. At the other end of the spectrum, there was a minority section, which aimed to acquire the trust and confidence of the Indians by increasing the concessions, which were allowed to them. This group, which wanted to accommodate the brown soldiers on favourable terms, can be labelled as the ‘liberal’ lobby. But the majority view was for striking a compromise formula between the two widely divergent viewpoints. The general aim was to reduce overdependence on two groups from north India: the Purbiyas and the Hindustani Muslims,¹⁴ but the British could not agree on the quantum of the intake of the other groups from a wider area. This was because their interpretation of the response of the various Indian communities during 1857 differed. Secondly, the British

¹² Russell H.S. Stolfi in ‘Chance in History: The Russian Winter of 1941-42’, *History*, vol. LXV, (1980), pp. 214-28 asserts that at times the historical process depends on the random roll of dice.

¹³ Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (1971, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), p. 35.

¹⁴ These two groups constituted 62% of the pre 1857 Indian Army. See table 1 of p. 48.

policy makers agreed on the utility of the white forces to deter the brown soldiers. Lord Clyde, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1857-60) voiced the general opinion, when in 1859 he said ‘...increased vigilance and maintaining awe of European troops... had become essential after 1857’. However the British faced the same dilemma which the Dutch faced in Indonesia. European soldiers were necessary for ‘frightening’ the colonial soldiers but acquiring an adequate number of white soldiers remained a problem.¹⁵ The British had to decide on the size of the white forces, which they could maintain in India as this influenced the number of Indians they needed to enlist.

George Clerk, a civilian bureaucrat, argued that the intensity of the 1857 outbreak was directly proportional to the paucity of the white soldiers.¹⁶ Among the British there was much disagreement as evident from table 2 about the proportion of British troops required to hold the Indian troops in check. Pradeep Barua erroneously states that the Peel Committee reached a consensus of deploying 1 European soldier for 3 Indian soldiers.¹⁷ As regards regional deployment of the British soldiers to balance the Indians, the political and military circles failed to generate a consensus. This was because the social composition of each of the 4 regional armies was different. John Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner of Punjab, Brigadier General Neville Chamberlain and Lieutenant Colonel Herbert B. Edwardes, officers of the Punjab Frontier Force,

¹⁵ The quotation is from *Peel committee*, Appendix no. 58, para 40; Lieutenant General S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth Century to the Twenty First Century* (New Delhi, 1993), p. 534; Martin Bossenbroeck, ‘The Living Tools of Empire: Recruitment of European Soldiers for the Dutch Colonial Army, 1814-1909’, *JICH*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1995), pp. 26-53.

¹⁶ Cohen, *Indian Army*, p. 38; *Peel committee*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁷ Pradeep Barua, ‘Strategies and Doctrines of Imperial Defence: Britain and India’, *JICH*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1997), p. 241.

constituted a lobby, which I term as the 'Punjab School'. This lobby claimed that the Punjabis were the most martial, Hindustanis were a bit less so, and the Madrassis were the least warlike. So they demanded 1 British soldier for every 2 Sikh or Pathan soldiers, 1 British soldier for every 3 Hindustani soldiers, and 1 European soldier for every 4 Madrassi soldiers.¹⁸ For Bengal, Punjab and the Northwest Frontier Province, Lieutenant General George Pollock demanded 27,000 Europeans to balance the 60,000 Indians required to police these areas. Previously, 80,000 Indians were required but Pollock considered this figure as too big to be safe. The upper limit of the European soldiers for these areas was fixed by Clerk. He wanted 60,000 British troops. For the Bengal Presidency, Major David Baird calculated a total of 50,000 Europeans. Captain G.F.S. Browne of 24th Madras Infantry reduced this figure by 10,000. Pollock wanted 12,000 Europeans for balancing 50,000 Indians policing the Bengal Presidency. Before 1857, there were 100,000 Indian troops in this presidency. He claimed 20,000 Europeans for Punjab to balance the 30,000 strong Punjab Frontier Force.¹⁹ Bartle Frere, the Commissioner of Sind demanded 12,500 white troops to balance 37,500 Indians in the Bombay Army.²⁰

¹⁸ *Supplementary report*, pp. 8, 14, 30.

¹⁹ *Peel committee*, pp. 1-3, 30-34, 38-40, 46.

²⁰ *Supplementary report*, pp. 45, 47-48.

Table 2: Balancing Schemes proposed by the Officers

Name of the Person	Ratio of European to Indian Soldiers
Colonel Burlton	1: 5
Captain G.F.S. Browne	1: 4
Lieutenant General George Pollock	1: 4 (excluding artillery which he wanted to be manned completely by the Europeans)
	1: 3 (including artillery)
	Pollock's balancing scheme does not take into account the irregular forces
Sir George Clerk	1: 4 (including the regular and the irregular sepoy units but excluding police)
	1: 3 (including only the regular sepoy units)
Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lowth Harington	1: 3 (including only the regular sepoy units)
Major David Baird	1: 1 or if it was not possible then 1: 2.

Source: *Peel committee*, pp.1-3, 30-4, 38-40, 46.

In the 1880s, General George Chesney formulated a new scheme for regional balancing. He wanted the white soldiers' proportion to be highest in the Punjab Army. In the Punjab Army, he demanded 1 European for every 1.5 Indian soldier but for the Madras and Bengal forces, 1 Britisher was adequate for balancing 2 Indian soldiers. What was the reasoning behind Chesney's scheme? We may guess that, in the 1880s, unlike in 1859, not the Bengal Presidency but the region west of Sutlej was considered to be strategically most vital. The Punjabi Army at this time was considered as the shock troops of the Indian Army. Finally, the imperial belief was that the striking power of the army was directly proportional to the number of white soldiers present.²¹

There was similar disagreement about the number of white soldiers required for holding India as a whole just after 1859. Browne wanted a maximum of 200,000 white troops. The majority opinion, as supported by Baird, Major General H. Hancock of the Bombay Army and Clyde considered 80,000 as adequate.²² Even in the 1890s, one of the principal proponents of balancing, Lieutenant M.J. King-Harman of the 2nd Battalion of 4th Gurkha Rifles harped on the 80,000 figure as adequate.²³ After the Mutiny, the government accepted the ratio of 1 European for 2 Indian soldiers. The empire deployed 60,000 British soldiers in India. The size of the Indian military manpower stood at

²¹ General George Chesney, *Indian Polity: A View of the System of Administration in India* (1894, reprint, New Delhi, 1976), p. 249; Memorandum on the visit of the Commander-in-Chief to the trans Indus frontier, para 16, Lieutenant Colonel H.W. Norman, Secy. to the India Govt. Fort William, 14 Jan. 1863, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

²² *Peel committee*, pp. 1-3, 30-34, 38-40; *Hancock report*, pp. 9, 31.

²³ Lieutenant Colonel M.J. King Harman, 'Second Essay', *JUSII*, vol.20, no. 86 (1891), p. 170.

130,000 men.²⁴ The proportion of roughly 1 European to 2 Indians continued in the British Indian Army till 1912, as evident from table 3.

²⁴ Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p. 189.

Table 3: Changing Proportion of the British and Indian Soldiers

Date	Army	British	Indian
1772	Madras Army	1	5.3
	Bombay Army	1	1.4
	Bengal Army	1	6.8
1794	Indian Army (including the irregulars)	1	5
	Indian Army	1	5.1
1856	Indian Army	1	6.3
1872	Indian Army	1	2
1882	Indian Army	1	2
1885	Indian Army	1	1.8
1912	Indian Army	1	2.2

Sources: Note on military expenditure, 1871-1872, Calcutta, 1 May 1872, Norman minutes, N.A.I.; *Army committee*, vol. 1, p. 36; General George Chesney, *Indian Polity: A View of the System of Administration in India* (1894, reprint, New Delhi, 1976), pp. 206, 208-9, 211, 215-6, 223-4, 227.

The British policy makers agreed to keep the European troops as a separate contingent, for both racial and pragmatic reasons, instead of mixing them up with the Indian soldiers within the regiments. If the European soldiers were permanently attached with the Indian regiments, the Punjab School warned, then the sepoys would catch the 'vices' of the European privates due to close association. Actually the officers of the 'native' regiments were very possessive of the Indian soldiers they commanded and they were unwilling to share power with the commanders of the British units, who they were sure would dominate, if the Indian units were amalgamated with the white units. Brigadier J. Christie, commander of the Dinapore division during 1858, claimed that if the European cavalry troopers were mixed with the light irregular Indian cavalry corps, then the Indians' mobility, which was their chief advantage, would get reduced as the European troopers would need commissariat stores.²⁵

The white troops were outnumbered by the Indian troops. The dominant imperial view as propounded by Clyde was as follows 'We should never rely upon.....any of their supposed feelings, but place it altogether out of their power to do serious mischief'.²⁶ But how was this to be done? Superior firepower was one of the crucial factors which enabled the numerically inferior British to overwhelm the 1857 rebels.²⁷ So one way of deterring the numerically superior Indian soldiers was to deny them sophisticated modern weapons and entry into the scientific branches like the sappers and the miners.

²⁵ *Supplementary report*, pp. 32, 309.

²⁶ *Peel committee*, Appendix 57, para 42.

²⁷ P.J.O. Taylor (General Editor), *A Companion to the Indian Mutiny of 1857* (New Delhi, 1996), p.20.

This was the policy followed by the Portuguese and the French in maintaining their empires in Africa vis-a-vis their 'native' troops. Pollock stressed that this policy would prevent the Indian soldiers from learning the superior tactics of offence and defence. But this was a double edged policy. This would undoubtedly raise the Raj's internal security but it would reduce the Indian empire's external security. If two thirds of the army (colonial soldiers) were armed with second grade weapons, then the Indian Army's military efficiency was drastically reduced. But officers like Lieutenant Colonel Wyllie emphasized that the post Mutiny strategic demand of the Indian Army was to police India. The Indian Army was not destined to meet any foreign power but only disarmed Indians and the second grade troops of the Indian princes. So arming the bulk of the personnel with inferior arms and denying them superior training was practicable.²⁸

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lowth Harington wanted the Indian sappers and miners to perform unskilled menial jobs like digging, etc. They were to be denied engineering jobs and prevented from entering the laboratories and the arsenals.²⁹ Hancock was however against the exclusion of the Indians from the duties of artificers in the arsenals and laboratories. He feared that if Harington's policy was followed, then many arsenals would have to close down. Hancock agreed to reduce the Indians in the sapper branch from 98 % to 87 %. To fill this gap, he wanted to raise the European contingent by 11%. For extra security, Hancock added that in the sapper and the miner

²⁸ V.G. Kiernan, 'Colonial Africa and its Armies', in Brian Bond and Ian Roy (eds), *War and Society: A Yearbook of Military History*, vol. 2 (London, 1977), pp. 21-22; *Peel committee*, pp. 5-6, 29.

²⁹ *Peel committee*, pp. 46-47.

corps, all the instructors (commissioned and non-commissioned officers) were to be Europeans.³⁰

The British officers concluded that the artillery was the queen of the battlefield. Long ago in 1748, the Directors had forbidden the entry of the Indians in the artillery branch. But the high cost of maintaining the European gunners in India and the lack of their availability forced the Company to enlist the Indians.³¹ And they also rebelled in 1857. What was shocking was that rebels managed their small stock of artillery very well. Harington after analyzing the conduct of 1857 War concluded that the Indians were overreliant on artillery support. So if the army had no Indian gunners, he asserted, the Indian infantry and cavalry would never have dreamt of rebellion. The general imperial view was that to prevent any future mutiny, most of the artillery should be concentrated in British hands which in turn would strengthen the deterrence mechanism. Baird and Browne demanded that the Indians should not be allowed to become gunners and not even drivers of the gun carriages. They could only be gun lascars for menial jobs like washing the guns etc. However Clyde warned against the danger of mixing the European gunners with Indian gun lascars. This would harm combat effectiveness, as the gunners due to their professional expertise would always look down upon the lascars.³²

³⁰ *Hancock report*, pp. 21, 26-27.

³¹ R.C. Butalia, *The Evolution of the Artillery in India: From the Battle of Plassey to the Revolt of 1857* (New Delhi, 1998), pp. 180-81, 335.

³² *Peel committee*, pp. 31- 32, 39, 47, Appendix 58, para 38.

Clerk advocated a liberal policy. He linked military balancing with the broader political aspect of imperialism. From the narrow military perspective, he argued, the military officers' programme of excluding the Indians from the scientific branches of warfare was perfectly consistent. But this was inconsistent, he claimed, with the broader 'civilizing' mission of the Raj. The Indians were trained in European literature and science. Their loyalty could only be won by trusting them. This was necessary since India could not be held by brute force alone. If the British were able to win the Indians' confidence by trusting them, said Clerk, they would be able to command zealous service from them. For winning the Indians' confidence, he wanted their entry in the higher branches of warfare. In the artillery, he wanted to retain the pre Mutiny formula of 3 Europeans for 5 Indians. However, in the battle winning 6 pdr. horse artillery, Clerk decided to have European numerical dominance i.e. 2 Europeans for 1 Indian, for security reasons. With the passage of time, he was ready to devolve the vital task of guarding frontier outposts to the Indian artillery.³³

Hancock came up with a compromise formula. He demanded British dominance not only in the horse artillery but also in the foot and siege artillery. In the artillery, he wanted to cut Indian manpower by 25% and to raise the strength of the European contingent from 41% to 66%. The Indian manpower thus reduced could be deployed in the unhealthy regions, so as to save white men's lives. During the hot and rainy seasons, small infantry detachments needed artillery support. Hancock wanted such arduous

³³ Ibid., pp. 38-39, 46.

duties to be performed by the Indian artillery. Each Indian artillery battalion was to be composed of 6 guns and 150 men (gunners, drivers and lascars).³⁴

In the end, Clerk's broad-minded policy was not implemented and Hancock's compromise formula won the day. Before 1857, there were 5950 Indian gunners, lascars and drivers. In 1859, Hancock wanted their numbers to be reduced to 2,900. By 1912, the army possessed 3876 Indian gunners and 4000 Indian sappers and miners.³⁵ Though the size of the Indian artillery remained small, their loyalty was crucial. So balancing them by recruiting diverse groups became an important plank of the British recruitment policy. Hancock pointed out warningly, that from 1837 onwards, all the Bombay Army's gunners had been Purbias. Dependence on a particular group from a narrow region was considered dangerous. So Hancock demanded that the Purbias were to be controlled by recruiting men from west India.³⁶ For the Punjab Frontier Force artillery, the Punjab School recruited 3 distinct communities from 3 distinct regions (Sikhs from the Sutlej area, Punjabi Muslims from west Punjab and Hindustanis from Uttar Pradesh). For the Bengal Army's artillery, they proposed the replacement of the north Indian high castes (whose preponderance they considered one of the primary reasons for 1857 Mutiny) with the Anglo-Indians, low castes and Muslims from the bazars and the cantonments at Meerut and Kanpur. The British were hoping to create a rural-urban divide between the gunners and the infantry and the cavalry as the latter 2 branches enlisted men from rural

³⁴ *Hancock report*, pp. 18, 21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24; *Army committee*, vol. I-A, *Minority report*, p. 135.

³⁶ *Hancock report*, p. 26.

backgrounds.³⁷ The Punjab School's gameplan for the Bengal Artillery was that 3 religious groups should balance each other. But the crux of the problem for the British was how to disaggregate the manpower pool of the Indian infantry and the cavalry.

Even though a large number of the sepoys rebelled in 1857, the British could not totally forego Indian manpower. John Jacob in June 1858 summed up the position by writing 'We cannot hold India by an army...composed of English soldiers, and ...to attempt to do so must be attended with speedy and utter ruin.... England could not supply the number of soldiers... required for the purpose of maintaining such an army'.³⁸

Beside the demographic limitation of Britain, Jacob pointed out the political compulsions of recruiting indigenous troops. He continued:

And... it is clear... that, if we could command even such a host of Europeans as the grand army with which Napoleon invaded Russia, the attempt to coerce India with such forces would only end in more complete and hopeless failure. The mere brute force of hundreds of thousands of men becomes powerless before that of hundreds of millions of such people as the nations of India. The whole force of the Mogul empire was never able to subdue even one of these nations, the Rajputs.³⁹

The questions before the British were, then, which 'nationalities' to recruit, in what proportions and how to organize them. 1857 slowed down the growth of a pan-Indian Army within the colonial context. Clyde voiced the post Mutiny policy. He asserted '...the distinct organization I believe to have been a benefit. If we had possessed

³⁷ Anon, *Manual for Bengal and Punjab Cavalry* (Calcutta, 1893), p. 103; *Supplementary report*, pp. 20-21, 24, 273-75.

³⁸ General John Jacob's letter to Colonel Durand, 7 June 1858, quoted in *Hancock report*, p. 18.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

one army in 1857, instead of four armies, we should have lost India'.⁴⁰ The Secretary of State Charles Wood emphasized territorial balancing. He wanted the regiments to enlist from particular districts to prevent the growth of clan feelings, which he considered to be the root cause of the 1857 Mutiny. He considered this scheme to be more useful than trying to balance various castes within the units. In the aftermath of the 1857 disaster, the imperialists agreed, for political if not for military reasons, to have separate regional armies each with a separate organization and distinct social compositions and territorial bases. Segregation was considered necessary to prevent the growth of a sentiment of unity among the colonial soldiers, and to utilize the local armies against each other if necessary.⁴¹ The vexed question, which the policy makers faced, was how to organize enlistment in the regional forces.

The balancing was effected at two levels: among the various armies, and among different groups within the regiments. Clerk, an advocate of centralization from the top, pursued the line that the detailed modalities for balancing within each army were too serious a business to be left to the regimental colonels. So the army H.Q. should fix the regulations as regards balancing, which the regimental commanders must follow.⁴²

The question then arose as to whether to go for general service corps or local units. Browne demanded that every Indian should be enlisted for general service, which

⁴⁰ *Peel committee*, Appendix 58, para 20.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 28; Charles Wood to the Governor General, no.73, 8 Feb. 1861, Military despatches of the Secretary of State, N.A.I.

⁴² *Peel Committee*, p. 40.

would provide the government maximum flexibility in arranging deployment to suit the balancing principles. To prevent the growth of territorial ties, he was against stationing soldiers in their recruiting grounds. He wanted the Madras Army, which recruited from the Madras Presidency, to garrison the Bengal Presidency and the Bengal Army, which enlisted from its own presidency, to police the Madras Presidency.⁴³ Deployment of subject peoples away from their recruiting zones, in order to prevent any bonhomie between the civilians and the troops, was a policy followed by the European powers even at home. During the First World War, the Alsatians and the Lorrainers who were recently bought under the German empire were stationed not in northern France but in eastern Europe.⁴⁴

Harington spearheaded the dissent. He claimed that the imperial policy of recruiting men from a particular area for general service and then deploying them into another corner of India was unworkable. He pointed out that some communities were unwilling to serve in all parts of India. He said that the Sikhs would not serve in Bengal and, when they were posted there, they deserted.⁴⁵ Harington actually was making a case for maintaining local irregular corps for particular regions.

Frere pointed out that the characteristic qualities of the different groups ought to be encouraged: the lack of overall assimilation among the groups within the units would

⁴³ Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁴ David Englander, 'Mutinies and Military Morale', in Hew Strachan (ed), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford, 1998), p. 194.

⁴⁵ *Peel committee*, p. 48.

prevent any mutiny from becoming wholesale. As regards the deployment and organization of the different groups in the regiments, the Punjab lobby argued that the general service corps containing all the 'races' and 'tribes' (mixed indiscriminately and eligible for service anywhere) should not be raised because if the inhabitants of different regions and communities remained together for a long time, then they would lose all their distinctions and a corporate sense might develop among them. They feared that it might take an anti-British colour.⁴⁶

Clerk supported Harington's and the Punjab lobby's proposal. The problem with Browne's scheme of having four distinct territorial zones for the four regional armies (Bombay, Bengal, Madras armies and the Punjab Frontier Force) was that the different communities were not evenly distributed throughout India. For example, the Muslims were concentrated in some pockets, so if different regiments of a particular army were assigned a region within that army's territorial boundary then there was a high probability of ethnic imbalance, which in turn would neutralize the whole logic of balancing. Clerk gave the example of the Guides Corps of the Punjab Frontier Force. The Guides were assigned to Peshawar valley (within the region west of the river Sutlej demarcated for the Punjab Frontier Force's recruitment) which had a concentration of Muslims. So the Guides got mostly Muslims and few Sikhs, as the latter were concentrated in central Punjab. So instead of the regional armies recruiting from 4 distinct areas, Clerk wanted the recruitment area of all the armies to be the Ganga valley and west India. The voice of disagreement was from Lieutenant Colonel E.B. Johnson,

⁴⁶ *Supplementary report*, pp. 14, 57.

the officiating Adjutant General. In 1862, he asserted that some regions like the western half of north India, where the rebellion was intense, should be excluded as the army's enlistment zone.⁴⁷

However, the general opinion was that no area should be totally neglected. Hugh Rose, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1860 to 1865, pointed out that for a broad based balancing, a particular presidency army might recruit part of its manpower from another presidency. He wanted the Bombay Army to balance the Marathas from Maharashtra, its own territory, with the Hindustanis recruited from north India, the Bengal Army's recruiting ground, and the south Indians, drawn from the Madras Army's enlistment zone. Rose pointed out that if the Bombay Army's recruiting were confined within the Bombay Presidency, then enough communities would not be available for balancing. Further, an adequate number of Marathas would not be available to balance the other communities in the other regional forces.⁴⁸ Hancock stated that every presidency army should enlist three-fourths of its personnel from its own presidency and the rest from other presidencies for greater social and territorial heterogeneity. In the end, Hancock's scheme was accepted, and with minor modifications continued till 1878. Following Hancock's policy, the Bombay Army recruited 29% of its manpower from the Bengal Presidency and the rest from Bombay

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 14; *Peel committee*, pp. 40, 44; Adjutant General's office, Jhansi, Circular no. 7049, 16 Dec. 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2, N.A.I.

⁴⁸ Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p. 534; *Supplementary report*, p.71.

Presidency in 1879. The Eden Commission in 1879 reintroduced Browne's plan. It wanted the three presidency armies to enlist from their own presidencies.⁴⁹

The next tricky question, which the British had to solve, was how to establish a balance between the four regional armies and especially what to do with the big bad wolf: the Bengal Army. Pollock was nervous about the Punjab Frontier Force's size. He considered 80,000 Punjabis (mostly Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims) too big a figure for security reasons. So he proposed cuts. In order to maintain four equal sized armies, Clerk wanted to raise the size of the Madras and the Bombay armies. But the problem still remained, because Bengal Army had to be very big, as its duty was to police the Bengal Presidency, which in fact was the biggest presidency. Clerk added a new dimension in the debate by injecting the political dimension of balancing. He wanted to reduce the size of the Bengal Presidency by transferring areas in central India (Nagpur, Saugor and Bundelkhand), as well as Burma to the Madras Presidency and Rajputana to the Bombay Presidency. These areas were to be garrisoned by the Madras and the Bombay armies respectively.⁵⁰ Hancock also agreed with Clerk's proposal of reducing the Bengal Army's size, by cutting down its responsibility, through reducing the Bengal Presidency's size. Hancock added that the Bengal Army, being spread over a wide area in north and central India, could not be supervised efficiently. So it should be concentrated for proper surveillance by transferring large chunks of central India

⁴⁹ Brian Robson, 'The Eden Commission and the Reform of the Indian Army, 1879-1895', *JSAHR*, vol. LX, no. 241 (1982), pp. 4-13; Saxena, *Military System*, p. 108; *The Army in India and its Evolution* (1924, reprint, New Delhi, 1985), pp. 21-22, 196; *Hancock report*, p. 27; *Eden commission*, pp. 77-80.

⁵⁰ *Peel committee*, pp. 3, 39-40, 44.

(regions south and west of Chambal) to the Madras and the Bombay armies. The Bengal Army should only guard the region from Cuttack to Gwalior. This plan, claimed Hancock, had a further advantage. By deploying men from south and west India (who constituted the Madras and the Bombay armies) into large parts of north India, the north Indians (Hindustanis who had rebelled in 1857) could be kept under check.⁵¹

The Anti-Martial Race lobby's ideologues pointed out that the domination of the Bengal Army by one group, the Purbias, resulted in the catastrophe in 1857. So their aim was to make this army's composition cosmopolitan. Pollock's policy was to establish a balance within the Bengal Army by enlisting 2 different groups- Punjabis and Hindustanis (north Indian Hindus and Muslims) and deploying them in different areas (Punjabi units in Punjab and Hindustani units in North India).⁵² The Punjab School hit upon the idea of balancing the Hindustanis in the Bengal Army with the Sikhs and the Pathans, groups which fed the Punjab Frontier Force. The lobby, which included Frere and Rose, I term as the 'Sind School', altered the geographical locales and wanted to balance the Purbias with the inhabitants drawn from Konkan and Sind. Christie focussed on balancing within the cavalry corps. Overdependence on either the high caste Hindus or the Muslims of a particular region was equally dangerous for him. He argued that, before the 1857 Mutiny, Muslims from Awadh and Haryana joined the irregular

⁵¹ *Hancock report*, pp. 30-31.

⁵² *Peel committee*, p. 8.

cavalry units of the Bengal Army. He wanted to establish equilibrium by enlisting the Shekawatis from Rajasthan and the Marathas.⁵³

What actually happened? The Bengal Army's recruiting ground, instead of being limited to only Hindustan, also came to include Punjab- and recruitment from Punjab went on increasing with the passage of time. In the 1860s, most of the regiments included Purbiyas, Hindustani Muslims, Jats, Sikhs and Punjabi Muslims.⁵⁴ The balancing policy worked well in the Madras Army, where 3 groups from south India, and the other castes enlisted from outside the Madras Presidency, prevented the domination of any single community from a particular area as is evident from table 4. Browne in 1859 warned the authorities that the number of the Deccani Muslims ought to be decreased as they constituted four-fifths of the Madras cavalry. Their proportion in the infantry remained one-third, and hence manageable.⁵⁵ Table 4 shows that by 1894, in accordance with Browne's suggestion, the size of the Muslim contingent in the Madras Army was reduced from 58% to 41%. The territorial balancing in the Madras Army is shown in table 5. Within the Madras Presidency, 4 regions supplied recruits, which ensured balancing. Hindustan played a marginal role in this balancing scheme.

⁵³ *Supplementary report*, pp. 14, 27, 29-31, 45, 50, 308-09.

⁵⁴ Lieutenant F.G. Cardew, *A Sketch of the Services of the Bengal Native Infantry to the Year 1895* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1971), pp. 329-31, 405-09.

⁵⁵ *Peel committee*, p. 35.

Table 4: Social Composition of the Madras Army

Groups	1859 %	1861 %	1876 %	1878 %	1879 %	1880 %	1894 %
Deccani	58	58	38	36	33.5	37	41
Muslims							
Tamils	10	9.6	16	9	10.5	9	12
Telugus	23	23	28	38	36	36	35
Hindustanis,	9	9.4	18	17	20	18	12
Low Castes							
and							
Christians							

Sources: H.H. Dodwell, *Sepoy Recruitment in the Old Madras Army* (Calcutta, 1922), pp. 47-48; Lieutenant Colonel Gautam Sharma, *Indian Army through the Ages* (Bombay, 1979), p. 242; Progs. no. 4584, 20 Aug. 1879, M.D.P., N.A.I.

Table 5: Regional Composition of the Madras Army, 1878-1894

Regions	% of Recruits			
Supplying				
Recruits				
	1878	1879	1880	1894
Karnataka	23.6	24.2	24.5	16.7
Trichinopoly	17.7	17.6	17	30.9
Northern	43.4	42.7	43.4	35.1
Circars				
Mysore and	11.4	12.1	11.8	11.2
Ceded Districts				
North India	3.9	3.4	3.3	6.1

Source: H.H. Dodwell, *Sepoy Recruitment in the Old Madras Army* (Calcutta, 1922), pp. X-XIII, 47.

Omissi writes that the British recruitment policy in the 1860s was to divide the Indian Army into 4 main components, which were recruited from different areas. In the north, he continues, the Hindustanis balanced the Punjabis; and the Bombay and Madras personnel balanced the Bengal Army.⁵⁶ But no such coherent all India doctrine actually existed among the Anti-Martial Race lobby. The Punjab School filled up the Punjab Frontier Force with the Pathans and the Sikhs, and wanted the Purbiyas in the Bengal Army to be balanced with the Punjabis. The Sind School wanted the Bombay Army to procure manpower from west, central and north India and the Madras Army followed the pre 1857 mixture of enlisting men from south and west India.

The principle of balancing various groups within the military to some extent was present in the 18th century Rajput Army. The Maharanas recruited various clans like the Chauhans, Rathors and the Solankis to prevent any of them becoming very powerful.⁵⁷

The Raj, like the Dual Monarchy, was an alien regime, which ruled over a polyethnic society. So the Anti-Martial Race lobby, while constructing a multi-ethnic army, tried to maintain a tripolar balance in the 1880s among the Punjabis, Deccanis and the Hindustanis by absorbing them in the following percentage-19.5%, 25%, and 42%. The rest were a motley mixture from various regions.⁵⁸ Similarly the Habsburg Army before 1914 maintained a tripolar balance among the 3 major ethnic communities: the

⁵⁶ Omissi, *Sepoy and the Raj*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ R.K. Saxena, *The Army of the Rajputs: A Study of 18th Century Rajputana* (Udaipur, 1989), pp. 8, 12, 54-55.

⁵⁸ See table 1 of page 48.

Germans, Magyars and the Czechs by absorbing them in the following percentages- 26.7%, 22.3%, and 13.5%. The rest came from minor groups like the Ruthenians, Poles etc.⁵⁹

What about the inter and intra ethnic interactions among and within the regiments- the basic building block of the Indian Army? Each infantry regiment had about 800 to 1000 men divided roughly into 8 to 10 companies.⁶⁰ In the pre 1857 era, the social religious and territorial base of the Bengal Army regiments was very narrow. The infantry regiments were a monopoly of the high castes (Brahmins and Rajputs from Awadh), with a few Ahirs. The low castes were not allowed entry. The cavalry regiments were composed of Muslims from Rohilkhand. In the 1850s the authorities attempted a half hearted policy of balancing the high caste Hindus in the infantry with the Sikhs. The Bengal units stationed in Punjab were ordered to fill up the vacancies with Sikhs, who were to vary between 100 to 200 men per regiment.⁶¹ However the quantum of Sikh recruitment was inadequate to balance the Purbiyas. When the Bengal Army was cut to ribbons in 1857, then the British got a free hand to reorganize the regiments on new ethnic lines.

⁵⁹ Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-18* (London, 1997), pp. 13, 38, note 24.

⁶⁰ For an account of the Indian Army's regimental fabric see John Gaylor, *Sons of John Company: The Indian and Pakistan Armies, 1903-1991* (1992, reprint, New Delhi, 1993).

⁶¹ Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry: Its Organisation and Discipline, 1796-1852* (Calcutta, 1962), pp. 120-21; Major G.F. MacMunn, *The Armies of India* (1911, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), pp. 83-92; *Peel committee, Appendix 58, para 3; Supplementary report, pp. 27-28.*

Not unity but diversity became the post Mutiny imperial maxim. Clyde formulated the new principles in the following words: 'A craving for uniformity has already done much mischief in the native army. What seems to be wanted is not uniformity, but dissimilarity. We should therefore have corps of all races and under different systems'.⁶² The general opinion was that all the units should be multi-ethnic. But how were the various ethnic groups to be arranged?

One lobby argued for a general mixture even within the companies. Wyllie wanted all the 'races' to be distributed promiscuously within the companies, thus resulting in the general mixture units.⁶³ Lieutenant Colonel R.H. Gall of the 14th Kings Light Dragoons wanted different groups from separate areas to be mixed up within the *risalahs* (equivalent to companies) of the irregular cavalry. He was sure that the lack of sympathy among men of dissimilar social and territorial backgrounds would prevent mutiny.⁶⁴

The case for class company regiments was put forward by Browne. He wanted a regiment to have different groups; but there should not be any mixture within the companies. He was apprehensive that a general mixture would reduce the sense of distinct ethnic identities of various groups thus disturbing the whole logic of 'divide and rule'. His model was Colonel Coke's Rifle, which was raised in 1849 with separate Afghan, Pathan and Sikh companies led by Indian officers of the same ethnic groups.

⁶² *Peel committee, Appendix 58, para 21.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁶⁴ *Supplementary report, p. 273.*

Browne asserted that this system would create a competitive spirit among the distinct racial companies; also, the Indian officers of the same community understood their men better.⁶⁵ For similar reasons Christie was also against homogeneity in the risalahs. He demanded each risalah should have a distinct ethnic group drawn from a particular district to prevent Muslim domination in the cavalry regiment.⁶⁶

The Punjab School demanded that some regiments should be homogeneous i.e. they should draw a particular group from a particular area. Such units were called class regiments. The rest of the regiments should be heterogeneous, with a mixture of class company and general mixture regiments. For the class company regiment the Punjab School proposed the following proportions: 4 Muslim companies, 4 Sikh companies and 2 Rajput companies or 5 Muslim companies, 3 Sikh companies, 1 Hindustani company and 1 Hill Rajput company or 5 Sikh companies, 3 Muslim companies 1 Hill Rajput company and 1 Hindustani company. The basic principle was that in a particular regiment, any group would not be allowed to exceed 50% of the personnel strength.⁶⁷ In a similar vein, Clerk agreed that the guiding principle should be that no community from a particular locality would be allowed to dominate in a particular regiment. He wanted half the regiments to be of general mixture and the rest to be class company units.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Peel committee*, p. 33; Field Marshal Earl Roberts, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* (London, 1897, reprint, 1898), p. 68.

⁶⁶ *Supplementary report*, pp. 309.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28, 30-31.

⁶⁸ *Peel committee*, pp. 40-41.

In the end, the Punjab School's scheme won the day, in a somewhat modified form. In 1864, of the 19 Bengal cavalry regiments, 3 were class regiments (one was composed of the Hindustani Muslims, another of the Jats and the third was composed of trans Indus tribes) another 6 were of general mixtures (Sikhs, Jats, Rajputs, Brahmins mixed in the troops or risalahs) and rest were class company regiments. Of the 50 Bengal Army infantry regiments, 16 were class company units, 6 were class regiments and the rest were general mixture regiments.⁶⁹

The two most crucial dimensions of ethnic balancing were caste and religion. DeWitt C. Ellinwood argues in an essay that the British initiated the social and religious manipulation of the Indian soldiers, which he terms as ethnic policy, in the 1890s, with the onset of the Martial Race theory.⁷⁰ From the following pages it will be clear that disaggregating Indian military manpower on the basis of social and religious identity, and then altering the proportion in the army to suit the imperial needs, was very much a feature of the British Indian enlistment policy from 1859 onwards.

A fault line appeared among the imperialists as regards their perceptions of the effects of various religions on the different groups' temperaments. The minority view was that there was no link between the different faiths and the various communities' sense of loyalty. But the majority opinion was that religion and loyalty were intermixed.

⁶⁹ Cardew, *Bengal Native Army*, pp. 329-31.

⁷⁰ DeWitt C. Ellinwood, 'Ethnicity in a Colonial Asian Army: British Policy, War and the Indian Army, 1914-18', in idem., and Cynthia H. Enloe (eds), *Ethnicity and the Military in Asia* (New Brunswick and London, 1981), pp. 89-144.

Harington represented the first group. He said that there was no intrinsic connection between the religion a group followed and the mentality of its members. So religious identities should not guide enlistment. He claimed that the 1857 Mutiny did not occur due to any religious factors. Faith was used as a medium to legitimize the grievances, which he identified as non-religious (like the annexation of Awadh, withdrawal of family pension from many soldiers' families etc.).⁷¹

But the dominant faction linked up religion with the recruitment programme, because they believed in the religiosity of some groups. Clerk, one spokesman of this lobby, argued just the opposite of Harington's line. Clerk claimed that the religious fanaticism of the high caste Hindus encouraged them to rebel.⁷² All the advocates of this lobby agreed that no particular religious groups were to be allowed to dominate the army. But there was much disagreement among them concerning which religious groups were most dependable.

Following the assumption that the members of the same religion would be loyal to each other, Browne wanted the Indian Christians for the crucial job of driving the artillery carriages. The perceptions of the British about the performance of the various groups during 1857 influenced their balancing paradigm. To strengthen his case, Browne claimed that the Indian Christians remained loyal in 1857. Toeing this line, Hugh Rose ordered that Indian Christian drummers and bandsmen of the disbanded regiments, and those Anglo-Indians who wanted to join the army in such posts, were to be inducted as

⁷¹ *Peel committee*, p. 50.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.38.

soldiers.⁷³ Rose continued that the Indian Christians had the advantage of knowing the customs and languages of the Indians, so they could function as proper feedback channels. For this reason, Rose also wanted them in the commissariat and military transport.⁷⁴

The Punjab lobby contended that, if adequate numbers of Indian Christians were not available, then the Karens of Pegu were to be utilized, because they had embraced Christianity. Traditional enmity existed between the Burmese and the Karens. And the Burmese were enemies of the British. For the Raj, the enemy's enemy was friend. So the Karens were a favoured group. The Punjab lobby felt that if the Asian Christians were scattered indiscriminately, then they would lose their distinct Christian ethos, and the main purpose of recruiting them would be lost. So they wanted separate Christian regiments, which should also include pastors, to strengthen the ethos of Christianity within the units.⁷⁵

One aspect of the imperial plan was that the innately disloyal traits of the high caste Hindus were to be checked by balancing them with an antagonistic religious community, other than the Indian Christians. Browne said that the priestly class among the Hindus (Purbias) in the Madras Army, unlike their counterpart in the Bengal Army, did not rebel. The secret was that the high caste Hindus of north India in the Madras

⁷³ Ibid., p. 32; Adjutant General's office, Calcutta, Circular no. 2470/A, 24 June 1861, Adjutant's General circulars, vol. 1.

⁷⁴ *Supplementary report*, p. 72.

⁷⁵ Constance M. Wilson, 'Burmese-Karen Warfare, 1840-1850: A Thai View', in Ellinwood and Enloe (eds), *Ethnicity and the Military*, pp. 18-51; *Supplementary report*, p. 27.

Army, were balanced by the Deccani Muslims.⁷⁶ So this scheme was provided as a prescription for the Bengal Army. For some, Muslims emerged as the most favoured potential candidates. Wyllie wanted to balance the 'treacherous' and 'fanatical' Brahmins with the Muslims. He assured his superiors that Pan-Islamism was a myth and the Muslim soldiers of the Indian Army would certainly fight other Muslims.⁷⁷

Besides the Hindus and the Muslims, the other religious community that attracted much imperial attention was the Sikhs. Baird wanted the Sikhs in greater proportion than other religious groups.⁷⁸ But this line of thinking was challenged by some of his colleagues. Browne and Clerk sounded a note of caution. For them, the priestly Hindu class who had recently mutinied, was the immediate danger. But, they claimed, the so called 'loyal' Sikhs posed the greatest potential danger. Browne said that favouring them was dangerous, as it would result in overdependence on them in the long run, just as the British were overdependent on the goodwill of the Purbiyas in the 1850s. He continued that the Sikhs had no intrinsic loyalty to the Raj. They joined the British banner for pay, plunder and hatred for the Hindustanis. Many British officers reported that the Sikhs had told them half-seriously and half-jokingly, 'The time will come when we will settle with you; we hated the Hindustanis and we killed them. The Raj will be yours tomorrow, but who can say whose it will be in another two years'? Browne

⁷⁶ *Peel committee*, p. 35.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

supplemented this grim warning by saying that he himself had conversed with the Sikhs and their opinion was that, it was a matter of chance who had the upper hand. If any Punjabi chief rebelled, Browne asserted that the Sikhs would rise in mutiny.⁷⁹ Clerk ended the debate by saying that an equal proportion should be maintained among the different religious groups from different areas-Sikhs from central Punjab, the Punjabi Muslims from west Punjab, priestly Hindus from north India.⁸⁰ Ultimately Browne and Clerk's suggestions were implemented. Only under the aegis of the Martial Race ideologues, did the share of the Sikhs and the Punjabi Muslims become disproportionate.⁸¹

But how did the British actually implement balancing of the religious groups at a micro level? Major General J. Hope Grant, who commanded the Awadh Field Force during the Mutiny, favoured a bipolar balance within the irregular cavalry regiments. His scheme was that the Pathans of the Indus frontier were to balance the Sikhs within each unit. He was against considering the Muslim community of northwest India as a monolithic entity. He implied that the mentalities of the Muslims varied with region. The Yusufzai tribe among the trans Indus Pathans hated the Punjabi Muslims of western Punjab and considered them inferior. So he was also ready to experiment with a tripolar religious balance within each regiment with the Sikhs of central Punjab, the Punjabi

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 34. The quotation is from the same page.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

⁸¹ See table 1 of page 48.

Muslims of Jhelum-Chenab area, and the Yusufzais from the border.⁸² Clyde's principle was lack of uniformity. Any uniform plan for organizing the religious groups was dangerous in his eyes. He pointed out that Hindu regiments must balance the Muslim regiments. The Hindu regiments may be monocaste units or multicaste units (composed of Brahmins and Rajputs, but organized in separate companies). He was also for mixing up the Hindus and the Muslims within the regiments. The religious elements of a particular unit were to come from a particular district and in some cases also from different areas.⁸³

Let us glance at how the religious balancing occurred in reality. In 1883, the 17th Bengal Infantry, a class company regiment, had 3 Hindustani Muslim companies which were balanced by 5 Hindu companies (2 Brahmins and 3 Rajputs). This was a case of bipolar religious balance. The 22nd Infantry Regiment of the Bengal Army exemplified a tripolar balance. Within it, there were 4 Sikh companies, 1 Brahmin company and 3 Punjabi Muslim companies, balancing each other.⁸⁴ The tripolar religious cum territorial balance was exemplified in the 37th Madras Infantry Regiment, which was a microcosm of the other units of the Madras Army. This unit had 8 companies. Of them 5 were composed of Hindus enlisted from Masulipatnam, Madura and Trichinopoly. The

⁸² *Supplementary report*, pp. 274-75.

⁸³ *Peel committee*, Appendix 58, para 4, 8, 14.

⁸⁴ Cardew, *Bengal Native Army*, pp. 406-07.

Muslims from Karnataka, Vellore and Hyderabad constituted 2 companies. And the Indian Christians from Arcot and Kolar constituted 1 company.⁸⁵

Civilizing the Savages: Marginal Groups in the Army

Next came the troublesome question of caste. The British accepted the caste as one of the principal determinant of the Indian society, which could not be ignored in constructing an Indian Army. Frere represented the minority position, when he asserted

Race, caste and tribe should be used in case of a soldier as a matter of identification like his father's name or surname. Any good recruit should be taken...The native soldiers should be treated as men with feelings, passions and prejudices...and not as mere machines or animals obeying some invariable instinct of caste or race.... Race alone to which we are now trusting will be a most fallacious guide. Not only shall we dismiss many good and useful soldiers and retain many bad and traitorous one, but we shall perpetuate a false and dangerous principle.⁸⁶

This is probably the most open challenge to the Bengal School's preference for the high castes and Roberts' later dalliance with the martial-unmartial division of the Indian 'races'. Harry G.W Smith voiced the dominant imperial opinion in 1859 when he said '...the subject of caste is a matter of utmost importance to the future army of India'.⁸⁷ So the British policy makers spent much ink over the caste question.

When the Pandies turned their muskets against their masters, the British, while trying to absorb the shock, overreacted. In a fit of revenge, some officers who operated

⁸⁵ Captain E.K. Molesworth, 'Indian Army Castes: Madrassis', *JUSII*, vol. XLII, no. 190 (1913), pp. 57-70; Lieutenant Colonel F.W. Tyrrell, 'The Races of the Madras Army', *JUSII*, no. 48 (1881), pp. 11-21.

⁸⁶ *Supplementary report*, p. 65.

⁸⁷ *Peel committee*, p. 8.

in Hindustan enlisted the low castes to teach the 'disloyal' high castes a lesson. After the Mutiny, the army became a peace-keeping force and was reduced to half of its pre 1857 size.⁸⁸ The British then had to decide whether these low status groups had to be integrated on a regular basis and, if so, upto what extent. From the British officers' discourse, we can reconstruct the varying imperial images about those who were at the lower strata of the ritual hierarchy. The imperial positions on low caste enlistment were conflicting. One group was for their exclusion. But the majority opinion was to recruit them for ending the high caste monopoly in the army.

Baird was against the inclusion of the low castes, because in his view the sweepers and the water carriers of Punjab fought badly in 1857. He claimed that the high caste soldiers should get the real credit because they valiantly led the newly-raised low-caste levies during the Mutiny.⁸⁹

The lobby for the inclusion of the low castes experienced the emergence of 2 factions which I term as the Gradualists and the Moderates. The Gradualists were for the slow and limited inclusion of selected fringe groups. They were cautious in their approach, so as not to threaten existing social reality: they did not want to alienate the high and the middle castes. The Radicals were for the unlimited entry of the marginal groups, and that too in the major branches of the army. They were for radically and quickly changing the Indian social structure through recruitment and service in the

⁸⁸ Chesney, *Indian Polity*, p. 224.

⁸⁹ *Peel committee*, p. 32.

armed forces. Their policy could be termed as 'Active Recruitment policy' as opposed to 'Passive Enlistment policy' of the Gradualists or the Moderates.

Lieutenant Colonel W. Mayhew, the Adjutant General of the post Mutiny army was an advocate of the Active Enlistment policy. He wanted the army to function as a motor of social change. Mayhew argued that the socially degraded groups, who lacked self esteem due to their lower position, could and should be improved, by recruiting them and then disciplining them. It was hoped that this scheme would transform their nature. Mayhew accepted that the low castes were 'ignorant' and 'barbaric'; but he held that in the army, as they would interact with the high castes on the basis of equality, their sense of inferiority would disappear. The army's appreciation of merit would implant self-respect among the low castes, and they would try to emulate their betters and get a chance to prove themselves. The Adjutant General continued that the low castes' personal hygiene would improve due to the military discipline. Captain E. Hall, commandant of the Aligarh Levy argued in a similar tone that though the Chamars were given to drugs and liquor, once within the army, the habits would change and they would become good soldiers. To cap it all, Charles Wood, wrote from London that low castes had performed well. Wood warned that in the mixed regiments, the low castes would be depressed due to interaction with the high castes. So, for him the solution was to set up low-caste regiments where, with the support of the British officers, all the marginal groups would develop proper self-confidence.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Lieutenant Colonel W. Mayhew, Adjutant General of the army, to the Secy. to the India Govt. H.Q. Calcutta, Progs. no. 547, 29 Sept. 1860, Captain E. Hall, commanding Aligarh levy, to Major of Brigade, Saugor dist., Kishengarh, Progs. no. 7, 6 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860, N.A.I.; Wood to the Governor General, London, no. 73, 8 Feb. 1861, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

The Gradualists were against allowing entry to all the low castes. Brigadier F. Wheeler, the spokesman of the Gradualist section of the low-caste lobby, divided the low castes into lower and lowest castes. For him, the Jats, Ahirs, Gujars and Lodhs were the lower castes, whom he considered to be disciplined, and hence eligible for enlistment. He believed that though the lowest castes like the 'Bhungies' were loyal they could not command obedience from others. Hence, Wheeler regarded them as ineligible for enlistment.⁹¹ Frere was also against the recruitment of the lowest castes like 'Maug's' and the 'Mehters', who were hereditary hangmen and sweepers. Similarly, the Punjab lobby was against including the Mazbi Sikhs, who were sweepers and the Mosulles, who were hereditary Muslim sweepers. While they agreed that in theory they ought to rise above casteism, in India caste was a social reality, as the Indians themselves maintained the caste system. If the lowest castes were allowed to join the army, then the British feared that the high and middle castes would avoid the army. And this would jeopardize the balancing game. The Punjab School warned that the high castes would tolerate to serve with the Shudras (who joined the Punjab Frontier Force), but not with the lowest castes, because the Shudras' position was higher than the lowest castes like the Mehters. Secondly, they feared that the lowest caste officers would have no influence over the high caste privates. The imperialists' were convinced that the marginal groups were themselves not ready to challenge the social order, even with the sahibs backing. The

⁹¹ Brigadier F. Wheeler, commanding Saugor dist., to the offg. Assistant Adjutant General, Simla, Progs. no. 548, 16 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

Punjab lobby cited an episode in 1857: When a high caste Bengal Army regiment mutinied, the low caste camp followers and the sweepers followed them.⁹²

But how could the tyranny of the high castes be challenged? The Punjab lobby hit upon the idea of creating some exclusive low caste regiments and gradually some mixed regiments were to be raised, where some high castes would join for the want of employment. Slowly but steadily, some lower castes should also be inducted in the high caste regiments. This would give rise to voluntary association among the castes. However, they cautioned, if lower castes were suddenly forced upon the high castes, the result would be chaos.⁹³

The Punjab lobby also wanted to recruit the lower castes, but for purely pragmatic reasons. It pointed out that low castes would remain loyal to the British because in the new order they would gain power and status, while if British rule was replaced by a high caste regime then they would again sink back to their deplorable position. They further argued that if commissioned grades were opened to the low castes then they would be more loyal, as this move would inculcate the ambition and the desire for upward mobility among the low castes.⁹⁴

Lieutenant Colonel H. Bruce, chief of Awadh Police and Colonel E. Darvali, commander of the 3rd Bengal European Regiment belonged to the Radical section.

⁹² *Supplementary report*, pp. 29, 71.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Unlike Wheeler, Frere and the Punjab School, they supported the enlistment of even the lowest castes like 'Domes' and 'Pasees'.⁹⁵

Some elements of the Martial Race paradigm seeped within the Gradualist's framework. The Gradualists, who were for selective enlistment of the low castes, linked soldiering capacities with occupations. Wheeler believed that agriculture bred the best warriors. This was similar to the pre 1857 Bengal Army officers and the later Martial Race ideologues assumption that agriculturists were the best soldiers.⁹⁶ So Wheeler wanted to enlist those low castes that were engaged in agriculture. After taking into account India's social dynamics, Wheeler was against recruiting those low castes that were engaged in occupations hated by the high castes.⁹⁷

Bruce and Hall challenged the connection between war-making capacities and occupations. They argued that sweepers, watermen and even looters could become soldiers. Bruce did not care about whether the caste Hindus hated any occupations. He said that the Bhungies were hated by the high castes because they were hereditary sweepers. But still they should be recruited. Military service, he asserted would raise the Bhungies' status in the Indian society. Not only for symbolic functions, but also for pragmatic reasons, Bruce wanted low castes from diverse professional backgrounds. He

⁹⁵ Lieutenant Colonel H. Bruce, chief of Awadh Police to the Adjutant General, Lucknow, Colonel E. Darvali, 3rd European Regiment, commanding at Fategarh, to Major G.S. Young, offg. Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, Kanpur, Progs. nos. 549, 777, 9 Jan. and 1 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

⁹⁶ Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*, pp. 193-99; Barat, *Bengal Army*, pp. 126, 150; Alavi, *Sepoys and the Company*, pp. 35-39, 42-45, 51; MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 130-31.

⁹⁷ Progs. no. 548, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

wanted the Pasees (a low caste of north India) in the prestigious sapper corps. Their hereditary occupation was mining. Bruce wanted to utilize their specialized professional skill in blowing up fortifications with mines during the sieges.⁹⁸

Similarly the advocates of Bheel recruitment belonging to the Radical section pointed out the strategic advantages which the Raj would derive by enlisting the tribes who existed outside the domains of Hindu society. Major General John Malcolm and A.H.M. Simcox argued that if the Bheels were not recruited then they would become marauders which in turn would cause a large-scale law and order problem for the British in central India.⁹⁹ Lieutenant H.L. Showers felt that the Bheels should first be inducted in the local corps, and if provided further financial incentives, the Bheels would then be willing to serve even in the northwestern frontier.¹⁰⁰ This was a radical policy statement indeed: no other officer came up with the idea of pitting central Indian tribes against the Pathans and the Afghans of the Indus frontier.

The Gradualists, like the Bengal Army officers of the pre 1857 era and the Martial Race ideologues, rejected those groups which did not follow high caste dietary preferences.¹⁰¹ Wheeler was against enlisting the Kunjurs (lowest caste) as their staple

⁹⁸ Progs. nos. 7, 549, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

⁹⁹ Major General John Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India including Malwa and Adjoining Provinces with the History and Copious Illustration of the Country*, vol. 1 (1880, reprint, New Delhi, 1970), pp. 519-22, 526; A.H.M. Simcox, *Memoir of Khandesh Bhil Corps, 1825-1891* (Bombay, 1912), pp. I-II, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Lieutenant H.L. Showers, 'The Meywar Bheel Corps', *JUSII*, vol. 20, no. 85 (1891), pp. 87-95.

¹⁰¹ Alavi, *Sepoys and the Company*, pp. 76-77, 79; Lieutenant General W.H. Goodenough and

diet was considered horrendous by the established norms of high caste society. But Hall and Bruce rejected this connection between 'proper diet' and service in the army.¹⁰²

The personal hygiene of the recruits was considered vital by the Martial Race theorists and the pre Mutiny Bengal Army officers.¹⁰³ Wheeler argued that the Bhungies were dirty, consequently had skin diseases, and so they should be excluded. But Mayhew and Bruce were confident that military service would reform their habits.¹⁰⁴

Both the Gradualists and the Radicals agreed that low castes had innate martial qualities but differed on the question of how quickly the qualities could be used. The Gradualists, led by Brigadier M.G. Dennis, argued that traditions and customs were social realities, and hence it would be time-consuming to transform the low castes' current status, into a higher ascribed status provided by the army. He wanted protracted social engineering before the low castes could function as soldiers. But the Radicals led by Major A.J. Austen, commanding at Nagode, Major General J.F. Bradford commanding Meerut division, and Bruce argued not only that the low castes were ready-made soldiers, but that they were better soldiers than the high castes.

Lieutenant Colonel J.C. Dalton, *The Army Book of the British Empire* (London, 1893), pp. 445, 448.

¹⁰² Progs. nos. 7, 548-49, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

¹⁰³ T.A. Heathcote, *The Military in British India: The Development of British Land Forces in South Asia, 1600-1947* (Manchester, 1995), p. 121; Major A.H. Bingley, *History, Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujars* (1899, reprint, New Delhi, 1978), p. 101; *Peel committee*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁴ Progs. nos. 547-49, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

Dennis argued that since the low castes hated the high castes, the former were more anxious to prove their loyalty and capability in the eyes of the British. Further, he believed that the low castes had more endurance, and were hence capable of laborious tasks. As they had no caste bias, they were willing to work in the entrenchments and fortifications unlike the Brahmins etc. But, he warned, generations of servitude had created in their minds the conviction that they were inferior to the high castes. This was proved by the fact that despite assurances of support from the British officers, they submitted to the higher castes in the army. Dennis concluded that it would take time, under benevolent British patronage, to convert them into fighting materials by enhancing their morale and inducing self-respect.¹⁰⁵

The Gradualists within the Anti-Martial Race camp demanded social engineering, with the aid of imported institutions, to transform the promising raw materials into proper soldiers. Rose pointed out that, like the low castes, other marginal groups like the Bheels and the Gonds were unwilling to join the army because service meant going away from home. He concluded that these 'savage', 'alcoholic' and 'polygamous' tribes could be converted into soldiers by military training. This could be provided within a quarter of a century with the aid of the Grenz Regiments utilized by the Austrian Army to coopt and discipline the frontier tribes. The Grenz Regiment was both a social and a military institution since it not only socialize the tribes but also transform them into soldiers. Both the Punjab lobby and Rose accepted that since the 'aboriginal races' like the Santhals and the Bheels would not like to serve far away from

¹⁰⁵ Brigadier M.G. Dennis, commanding at Allahabad, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Kanpur, Progs. no. 551, 1 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

their home for a long period, their recruitment could only be gradual. Within the Grenz Regiments, they would slowly appreciate military service and probably go to any part of India for duty.¹⁰⁶

From the opposite end of the spectrum, Austen provided empirical data to show that even in the immediate context, low castes had proved to be far better and more loyal than the high caste personnel. One Havildar Bindha of Bhalleca caste remained loyal, when his high caste colleagues in the 11th Regiment of the Bengal Army rebelled in 1857. Then Havildar Girwar, a Lodh of 1st Punjab Infantry, performed extremely well in the siege of Delhi.¹⁰⁷ Bradford stated that from the target firing practice and drill, it was evident that the low caste privates performed better than the high caste rank and file. He continued that the low caste commissioned and non-commissioned officers were much better than their high caste counterparts.¹⁰⁸

Bruce asserted that the low castes were better soldiers than the high castes because the latter's ritualized lifestyle impeded their capabilities as soldiers. They spent one-fourth of the day in cooking, another one-fourth in eating etc. So the high castes were effeminate and the middle castes were also influenced by such customs. Hence

¹⁰⁶ *Supplementary report*, pp. 27, 71-72.

¹⁰⁷ Major A.J. Austen, commanding at Nagode, to Captain C. Harris, commanding the Bijnore Levy, Progs. no. 547, 1 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

¹⁰⁸ Major General J.F. Bradford, commanding Meerut, to the Adjutant General, Meerut, Progs. no. 552, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

Bruce shot down Darvali's plan of creating an alliance between the middle castes and the low caste to tide over emergencies.¹⁰⁹

Hugh Rose and Mayhew rounded off the discussion by saying that recruitment should be guided by egalitarianism. Low castes were to be given an equal opportunity to join the army, as they were also the Queen's subjects.¹¹⁰

What was the actual brassstacks of low caste enlistment? Stephen P. Cohen, in one of his articles, suggested that during a crisis, the intake of the low castes increased, and in peacetime their induction decreased.¹¹¹ He does not provide any figures to back up his claim. But my statistics show that Cohen's model is correct. In 1858, when the British were in a deep crisis, the low castes constituted 18 % of the Indian Army. In 1885 their share was reduced to 8% and it further declined to 1.5% in 1912. The absolute numbers of low castes on those dates was 17,309, then 10,000 and finally 2000 in 1912.¹¹² One thing is clear. The discussion about such marginal groups was intense just when the crisis was over and before the retrenchment began to occur. We could hazard a guess about why the low castes failed to gain a substantial foothold in the army, despite having the support of the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State. One reason may be factionalism- the split between the Gradualists and the Radicals within the low

¹⁰⁹ Progs. nos. 549-50, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

¹¹⁰ Progs. no. 547, M.D.P. Oct. 1860.

¹¹¹ Stephen P. Cohen, 'The Untouchable Soldier: Caste, Politics and the Indian Army', *JAS*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1969), pp. 453-68.

¹¹² *Army commission*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 156; *Peel committee*, Appendix no. 22, Sept. 1858.

caste lobby and the second factor was Indian reality. Even in the pre British armies, the low castes always occupied a fringe position. Kolff argues that many low status groups gained Kshatriya status after joining the precolonial armies. What Kolff overlooks is the fact that this sort of upward mobility occurred only in the infantry but never in the elite branch, the cavalry.¹¹³

II

A Critique of the 'Racial Decline' of the Madras Army.

By the end of the 19th century, the Martial Race theorists argued that due to the 'racial decline' of the Madrassis, the Madras Army was getting ineffective. In 1882 Field Marshal Roberts, the father figure of the Martial Race ideology, linked the degeneration of the South Indian recruits with ecology (the hot climate and absence of a frontier in the south).¹¹⁴ His formula was to reduce the Madras Army's size and to replace the Madrassis with the northwestern 'martial races'. Roberts underestimated the internal security threat and overestimated the danger of external threat. He claimed that the real danger was a Russian-sponsored Afghan invasion, which could only be countered with the 'martial races'. Due to the development of communications, he stressed that the

¹¹³ Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*, pp. 157, 196; S. Inayat Ali Zaidi, 'Ordinary Kachawaha Troopers Serving the Mughal Empire: Composition and Structure of the Contingents of the Kachawaha Nobles', *SIH*, vol. 2, no. 1(1980), pp. 57-68; Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Art of War in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 57-61, 94-104.

¹¹⁴ Brian Robson (ed), *Roberts in India: The Military Papers of Field Marshal Lord Roberts, 1876-1893* (Stroud, 1993), p. 264.

British Indian troops could be transported quickly to meet any local internal threat. So Roberts was against maintaining a balance between the four regional armies.¹¹⁵

Many officers both inside and outside the Madras Army, who constituted the Anti-Martial Race lobby, opposed the Martial Race ideologue's plan tooth and nail. The opponents of the Martial Race theory argued that the recruitment should not be restrictive, because to revert to overdependence on a few groups from a narrow region was impolitic. Moreover, to deny entry to various indigenous groups in the army on climatic and racial grounds, they claimed was mistaken.

Lieutenant F.G. Cardew challenged the Martial Race theorists' assumption that the Pax Britannica had reduced the warlike spirit of the Madrassis by inducing their youth to lay aside the sword for the ploughshare.¹¹⁶ King-Harman wrote in 1891 in the service press 'There is no conducive proof that the much maligned "Pax Britannica" has in any way reduced the warlike spirit of these warlike races which have hitherto been enlisted in our Indian Army'.¹¹⁷

Another officer, Major E. G. Barrow pointed out the basic fallacy of the Marital Race paradigm by denying the bipolar Oriental-Occidental divide. In 1891 he commented:

It is doubtful if we are fully justified in saying that the 'Pax Britannica' has wholly destroyed the warlike spirit of the peoples who have most

¹¹⁵ Roberts, *Forty One Years*, pp. 499, 530, 532-34.

¹¹⁶ Lieutenant F.G. Cardew, 'Our Recruiting Grounds of the Future for the Indian Army', *JUSII*, vol. 20, no. 86 (1891), p. 131.

¹¹⁷ King-Harman, 'Second Essay', p. 157.

profited by it, and though the ploughshare may offer to many greater attractions than the sword, it by no means proves that the former warlike spirit of the people has been deadened thereby, any more than we can assert that the industrial activity of England has destroyed the stubborn tenacity which distinguished the soldier who fought under Marlborough or Wellington.¹¹⁸

Captain E.K. Molesworth of the Royal Engineers, by comparing Oriental with the Occidental military history, attempted to challenge the Martial Race paradigm. In 1913, he wrote: 'Long peace need not make a man inefficient for war any more than twenty campaigns could make a soldier of the Frederick the Great's mule'.¹¹⁹

Lieutenant R. M. Rainey, commander of the 12th Burma Regiment Madras Infantry in 1891, blamed the faulty British policy and not the south Indian society, for the Madras Army's ills. Any army will fare badly if suddenly brought out of the cupboard and thrown into battle. It was the Raj's fault, he claimed, in not allowing the Madras Army to participate in the controlled warfare of the northwest frontier and for not allowing full participation in the Second Afghan War. The result was that the Madras Army's British officers lost all skills.¹²⁰

Cardew opposed the notion, prevalent among the military circles, that the Madras cavalry (composed of the Deccani Muslims) had degenerated. About 11,000 Muslims from Karnataka and Mysore were in the Madras cavalry in the 1890s. Their families had supplied recruits for generations. He asserted that individual instances of personal bravery were many. The Madras cavalry was allowed to operate only in the

¹¹⁸ Major E.G. Barrow, 'Third Essay', *JUSII*, vol. 20, no. 86 (1891), pp. 173-74.

¹¹⁹ Captain E.K. Molesworth, 'Indian Army Castes: Madrassis', *JUSII*, vol. XLII, no. 190 (1913), p. 57.

¹²⁰ Lieutenant R.M. Rainey, 'The Madras Army', *JUSII*, vol. 20, no. 85 (1891), p. 79.

Burmese jungles and it was unfair, argued Cardew, to expect any cavalry to perform well in the swampy jungle tracts.¹²¹

Rainey argued that the Madras regiments lacked fighting spirit, not because of the recruits, but due to the general mixture of the various 'nationalities' within the regiments, which prevented the growth of a regimental *esprit de corps*. The Tamils, Telugus, and the Deccani Muslims were mixed together within the companies. As these groups had different cultures (customs, languages etc), group loyalty could not be constructed from this motley collection. In the regiments, different groups spoke in different languages; and the British officers were not language specialists. This created confusion in command on the battlefields. Rainey claimed that in the Bengal Army, if the Jats, Gujars and the Hindustani Muslims were mixed together within the companies, then there would be only confusion and anarchy resulting in militarily ineffectiveness of these regiments. In a sense Rainey was right, because the trend was towards class regiments. Between 1864 and 1883, mixed regiments were replaced by class regiments in the Bengal Army. Rainey's solution was that the Madras Army should go for class regiments (Tamil regiments, Telugu regiments etc.) or if that was not possible, then at least for class company regiments. This, he claimed, would create a regimental ethos, which in turn would give rise to a healthy inter-regimental rivalry, thus raising the army's military effectiveness. These mid-level officers were aware of military developments in the wider world. From the early 18th century onwards, the Prussian Army adopted the canton system, which linked the different regiments with specific

¹²¹ Cardew, 'Recruiting Grounds', pp. 146-47.

localities. Rainey proposed that the Madras Army should also experiment in establishing territorial loyalty through a similar scheme, so that every regiment would recruit from a particular locality, just like the Prussian Army.¹²²

Major General H.W. Norman pointed out the increasing administrative inefficiency, which led to the rotting of the Madras Army. He claimed that the Madras Army was not combat worthy because it had the largest number of old men. Norman was sure that the soldiers had a shelf life of 15 years of service, after which they became useless. Table 6 prepared, from the data supplied by Norman, shows that the Madras Army had the highest number of aged personnel, while the Punjab Frontier Force, generally regarded as the most effective militarily¹²³ had the lowest percentage of long service personnel.

¹²² Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London, 1983, reprint, 1993), p. 57; Cardew, *Bengal Native Army*, pp. 329-31, 405-07; Rainey, 'Madras Army', pp. 81, 85.

¹²³ Cardew, *Bengal Native Army*, p. 410.

Table 6: Soldiers who took Pensions at Different Periods of Service (1870-75)

	After 15 years of Service	After 16-20 years of Service	After 21-25 years of Service	After 26-30 years of Service	After 31-40 years of Service	Above 40 years of service
Bengal Army	40.5%	21%	20%	12%	6%	.5%
Punjab Frontier Force	35%	40%	22%	2%	1%	
Bombay Army	10%	35%	25%	19%	10%	1%
Madras Army	8%	28%	20.5%	18%	20%	5.5%

Source: Minute on the organization of the native army of India, Ch. 5, Pension system, para 18, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

Norman tried to grapple with the question of why the Madras Army, unlike the Punjab Frontier Force and the Bengal Army, kept so many old men in its ranks. His view was that, Punjab and the western part of north India being agriculturally prosperous, jobs were available. Recent researches support Norman's contention. Most of the soldiers who joined the Punjab Frontier Force and the Bengal Army were younger sons of small farmers. During famines, they joined the army and after a short period of service, they went back to their villages and became agriculturists.¹²⁴ From other sources, we know that the death of the elder brothers also forced such soldiers to seek voluntary discharge.¹²⁵ On the other hand, concluded Rainey, the Madrassi soldiers were far poorer. Further, living conditions were costly in the Madras Presidency. While the Madrassi soldiers had to support their relations, the relatives of the north and northwestern troops partly supported the latter in financial terms.¹²⁶ Lieutenant Colonel F.W. Tyrrell, commandant of the 37th Grenadier Madras Infantry Regiment, pointed out in 1881 that the Deccani Muslims, who constituted one third of the Madras Army, were declining, not for racial but for other reasons. Due to the influence of Islam they lacked the desire to acquire Western education. As the army in the post 1859 era was especially geared for enlisting English educated soldiers, these Muslims were at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the other groups. The decline in the prosperity of the peninsular Muslims begun

¹²⁴ Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Conditions of the Bengal Army, para 63, 65-66, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes; Ian Talbot, 'British rule in Punjab, 1849-1947', *JICH*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1991), pp. 210-13.

¹²⁵ Bingley, *Jats and Gujars*, pp. 97-98.

¹²⁶ Rainey, 'Madras Army', pp. 80-81.

with the collapse of Tipu's Mysore. With the army job market collapsing due to the slow reduction of the Madras Army from the 1880s, and government favouring the northwesterners over the southerners, the latter were in dire straits.¹²⁷ So for the Punjabis, military service was a strategy to tide over temporary agrarian disasters¹²⁸ while for the Madrassis, army service was a long term solution for unemployment. Further, the call of clan feeling and the attraction of tribal freedom encouraged the tribesman of the Punjab Frontier Force to take early discharge. Voluntary discharges were more or less absent in the Madras Army.¹²⁹

Another reason for the relative greyness of the Madras Army was that its soldiers remained loyal during 1857. The middle-aged soldiers of the 1850s were all old men by the 1870s. On the other hand, as the Bengal Army rebelled, the army reorganized in 1859 was able to recruit young men. And due to a quick turnover (a high rate of discharge), the Bengal Army had few long service jawans. The Punjab Frontier Force, being newly enlarged, had no long service soldiers. So in the 1870s, the Madras Army had 2.5 times more soldiers with 30 to 40 years of service behind them.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Lieutenant Colonel F.W. Tyrrell, 'The Races of the Madras Army', *JUSII*, vol. 10, no. 48 (1881), pp. 12-18.

¹²⁸ The Sikhs like the Purbiyas joined the army as part of their multidimensional strategy to tide over temporary agrarian downswings. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy*, pp. 1-31, 193-99; R.G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 43-45.

¹²⁹ Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 5, Pension system, Discharges without pension, para 10, Ch. 2, para 63,66, Ch. 3, Madras Army, para 38, Norman minutes.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Ch. 5, para 15, 19.

These officers concluded that for continuation for the divide and rule policy, the Madras Army should not only be maintained, but rejuvenated. They wanted the old troops to be deployed in the veteran corps, destined not for field but for garrison duties. The real problem, they claimed, was in getting effective British officers. They were not willing to join the Madras Army due to the lack of the career prospects it offered. This was because this army was never used in field duties, regiments were broken up and the Madras Army's British officers were discriminated against compared to those from the Punjab Frontier force and the Bengal Army. Even Kitchener accepted that no efficient British officer was willing to join the Madras Army. They would rather join the commissariat.¹³¹

Conclusion

The Anti-Martial Race lobby made an attempt to integrate the groups on the fringe of society like the low castes. Their broad-based egalitarian policy, of including as many communities as possible, was an imperial attempt was to make the military force socially and territorially diverse, and thus to give as wide a base as possible to the colonial state. The Balanced Recruitment policy of the Anti-Martial Race lobby, despite having strands of divide and rule, was somewhat uncolonial as the attempt in the long run was to create an army which would be representative of the indigenous society. And this policy had both an indigenous as well as a European base. The Anti-Martial Race lobby's attack on the Martial Race paradigm regarding the Madras Army shows that not all the British

¹³¹ Rainey, 'Madras Army', p. 86; Chesney, *Indian Polity*, pp. 233-34, Kitchener to Roberts, Simla, Q/6, Q/10, 12 March 1903, 10 May 1903, Kitchener papers, Reel no. 2, M/F, N.A.I.

officers were 'racist'.¹³² Historians miss this point because they concentrate on the private papers of those, like Roberts, who was at the highest echelon of the military bureaucracy.

The proponents of the Anti-Martial Race ideology somewhat modified the Martial Race ideology itself. The greatest proponent of the Martial Race theory after Roberts, Major G.F. MacMunn accepted, unlike his illustrious predecessor, that many south Indian 'races' were indeed 'martial'.¹³³ What effect did the Anti-Martial Race ideology have on actual recruitment? Even in 1912, 34 % of the recruits came from the 'unmartial races'.¹³⁴ This by itself was no mean achievement. With the advantage of hindsight we can say that a broad based enlistment policy, as proposed by the Anti-

¹³² The historians like Peter Robb and S. Bayly while emphasizing the racial strands of the Martial Race ideologues' thinking, miss the counter discourse of the Anti-Martial Race camp. Peter Robb, 'Introduction: South Asia and the Concept of Race', and Susan Bayly, 'Caste and "Race" in the Colonial Ethnography of India', in Robb (ed), *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 1-76, 165-218.

¹³³ MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 169-72.

¹³⁴ *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 156.

Martial Race ideologues, would have saved the Indian Army from the chaos and confusion in 1914-1915 when selective enlistment, as propounded by the Martial Race ideologues, failed to meet the huge vacancies in the ranks caused by the demands of *Totaler Krieg*.

Chapter 3

The Response of the Martial Race Lobby: The Handbook Programme, 1890 - 1913

The Sepoy Army, was hungry for manpower. The subcontinent was a vast military labour market overflowing with potential recruits. This market was dominated by one supra-regional power-the Raj. India appeared to the British to consist of a complex mosaic of tribes and castes with varying degrees of loyalty and differing soldiering capabilities. The clash between two opposing recruiting ideologies (the Martial Race and the Anti-Martial Race theories) made it imperative for the British to decide whom to recruit, and from which region. Hence a sort of anthropological survey was initiated in late 19th century by the army high command. At that time, the Martial Race lobby was dominant. In accordance with its orders, a group of British officers carried out the project of the disaggregation and categorization of the colonial subjects, for the effective utilization of their manpower. The information these officers compiled was later published in the form of Handbooks from 1890 onwards.

The historiography of the Indian Army fails to present the difference between the Handbooks and the original proponents of the Martial Race theory.¹ The outlook of the Handbook authors, and the way they modified the Martial Race ideology in reaction to the Anti-Martial Race ideology, are neglected. The Handbooks not only influenced the army's recruitment pattern; they also throw light on the complex ideological structures of British India.

¹ Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (1974, reprint, DehraDun, 1988), pp. 350-58; David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London, 1994), pp. 10-46.

The Background

Field Marshal Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1885 to 1893, was the principal proponent of the Martial Race theory. Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1902 to 1909, carried Roberts' policy to its logical conclusion. So, under Roberts and Kitchener, the hunt for the 'martial races' began.² Roberts and Kitchener ordered a group of British officers to study the food habits, religion, customs and social norms of various groups in order to find out which of them were most suitable for induction in the army. Their aim was probably to reshape the Martial Race ideology in the wake of the challenge posed by the Anti-Martial Race lobby.

However, even before the production of the Handbooks, many army officers undertook ethnological studies of various groups in an attempt to aid the army's recruitment programme. Their papers appeared in the Indian Army's professional journal- the *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*. Lieutenant E. G. Barrow, who happened to be the Deputy Assistant Adjutant General of the Indian Army in the 1880s, attempted an ethnological survey of the Afridi tribe inhabiting Tirah. He divided the Afridis into 8 clans, whose total number of fighting males he calculated to be about 22,500. Barrow found that each clan inhabited a particular area. For example the Aka Khel clan of the Afridis inhabited the Warran valley. He visualized that the British policy of annexation would result in beneficial social changes for the Afridis. Once Tirah was conquered, then '...this great clan of robbers

² Lieutenant General S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty First Century* (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 286-305; Brian Robson (ed), *Roberts in India: The Military Papers of Field Marshal Lord Roberts, 1876-1893* (Stroud, 1993), pp. 256-59.

would in time, like the Pathans of the Derajat and Eusofzye, settle down into peaceful cultivators and herdsmen or enlist into the army....³

Another such ethnological enquiry was conducted by Captain W. H. F. Basevi of the 6th Burma Battalion. His subjects were the Panthyas, the Muslims of Yunnan. He further developed the linkages between demography and recruitment. He calculated that there were 5000000 Panthyas, who could easily supply 10 regiments. He further clarified an ecological perspective. Basevi asserted that the physical geography of Yunnan was such that the inhabitants had to be excellent marchers and inured to exposure both to cold and rain. So they were well suited to the stress and strain of soldiering. Like the Martial Race theorists, he made a connection between food habits and being warlike. The Panthyas, being meat eaters, were regarded as proper fighters.⁴

Captain A. Apthorpe of the 90th Punjabis conducted an ethnological study on the Kachins who inhabited the mountainous tract of north Burma. Apthorpe, Basevi and Barrow accepted Roberts' assumption that warrior races were generally available along the mountainous tracts of the frontier. Further, Apthorpe followed the Martial Race theorists' tendency to link up occupation with war-making capacity. Being agriculturists, the Kachins were regarded as excellent material for the army.⁵ Though

³ Lieutenant E.G. Barrow, 'Tirah and the Afridi Question', *JUSII*, vol. 8, no. 49 (1881), pp. 172-81. The quotation is from p. 173.

⁴ Lieutenant General W.H. Goodenough and Lieutenant Colonel J.C. Dalton, *The Army Book of the British Empire* (London, 1893), p. 445; Captain W.H.F. Basevi, 'A Proposal to Enlist the Panthyas', *JUSII*, vol. 31, no. 147 (1902), pp. 166-69.

⁵ Captain A. Apthorpe, 'The Kachins and Others: A New Recruiting Area', *JUSII*, vol. XLI, no. 186 (1912), pp. 53-59; Robson, *Roberts in India*, pp. 262-66.

Basevi and Apthorpe shared many of the assumptions of the Martial Race spokesmen, unlike the latter group, they extended their search away from northwest India to other parts of the subcontinent. The Handbook authors continued this trend.

The Raj's civilian officers also undertook similar surveys. The underlying conviction was that some groups were more tuned towards warfare. So the use of ethnohistory to find the racial origin of the potential recruits was common. H.W. Bellew, the Sanitary Commissioner of Punjab in 1880, tried to argue from linguistic, physiognomie and historical evidences that the Afghans were racially linked with the martial Israelites.⁶ The Handbooks emerged against such a background.

II

The Handbooks

The Handbooks' authors modified, elaborated and added several themes and methodologies. All the Handbook authors were commissioned officers. P. Holland Pryor (who wrote on the Moplahs) was a Major and Eden Vansittart (who focused on the Gurkhas) was a Captain. The authors of the Handbooks were neither senior military commanders nor desk staff officers who sat miles away at head quarters. They were men on active duty and in continuous interaction with Indians. They were recruiting officers. Vansittart was a specialist on the Gurkhas and he was attached with the 2nd Battalion of the 5th Gurkha Rifles. So he was assigned the task of preparing an ethnological compendium on the Gurkhas.⁷

⁶ H.W. Bellew, 'A New Afghan Question', *JUSII*, vol. 47, (1881), pp. 49-97.

⁷ Major P. Holland Pryor, *Class Handbooks on the Indian Army: Mapillas or Moplahs* (Calcutta, 1904); Captain Eden Vansittart, *The Gurkhas* (1890, reprint, New Delhi, 1980).

These books were written by the officers as part of their professional duty, under orders from the Intelligence Department of the Quarter Master General. The aim of these books was to guide future recruiting officers. Vansittart dedicated his book, which came out in 1890, to Roberts, with the latter's permission. When Vansittart updated his book in 1906, he dedicated that edition to Kitchener. Major A. H. Bingley initiated his survey of the Jats, Gujars and the Ahirs on the orders of the government of India. The aim of these books was the creation and consolidation of knowledge about Indian society, so as to decide on whom to recruit, on what basis, and how to raise the quality of the personnel.⁸

The format of all the Handbooks was more or less similar. Each author studied 1, 2 or a maximum of 3 groups. Vansittart was concerned with the Gurkhas, Major R. M. Betham with the Marathas and the south Indian Muslims, and Bingley with the Jats, Gujars and the Ahirs.⁹ Each book was about 200 pages long and dealt with broadly 5 themes: the geographical distribution of the groups, their religion, their customs, their history till their confrontation with the British, and finally the recruiting procedures that needed to be followed. These books were thus partly descriptive and partly prescriptive.

Each book was updated in the light of new information. Vansittart originally published his treatise on the Gurkhas in 1890. He updated it twice, in 1896 and in 1906. In his later editions his source base became wider. In his 1896 edition, unlike in

⁸ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*; idem., *Handbooks for the Indian Army: The Gurkhas* (Calcutta, 1906) (henceforth *Handbooks*); Major A.H. Bingley, *Caste Handbooks for the Indian Army: Jats, Gujars and Ahirs* (Calcutta, 1904).

⁹ Bingley, *Jats, Gujars and Ahirs*; Major R.M. Betham, *Handbooks for the Indian Army: Marathas and Dekhani Musulmans* (Calcutta, 1908).

his earlier work, Vansittart used Doctor Wright's *History of Nepal* published in 1877 and C. A. Bendall's *Journey in Nepal* which came out in 1886. Further, in the 1896 edition, Vansittart studied 2 new groups of eastern Nepal, the Newars and the Kirantis, in an attempt to widen the recruiting base.¹⁰ This reflected the development of empire's feedback apparatus with time.

Most of the books concentrated on particular groups coming from a particular region. The emphasis was on the areas where the highest concentrations of the 'martial' groups were present. Bingley, while collecting data on the Sikhs, put emphasis on areas of central Punjab like Manjha and Malwa.¹¹ None of these books were all-India studies. The only exception is P.D. Bonarjee's book. The empire's civilian officers, including British officers like Bellew and Indians like Bonarjee, conducted ethnological studies at the behest of the army. Interestingly, in Bonarjee's conception, the Santhals and the Bheels were also 'martial races'. Further, unlike Roberts, Bonarjee believed that 'martial' groups could also be found in south India. The Tamils and the Malayalis appeared to be 'martial' to Bonarjee. This probably was a tactic to accommodate some of the views of the Anti-Martial Race lobby. Almost all the Handbook authors had a bias towards men from north India. Only Bonarjee and Betham were free from it.¹²

¹⁰ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*; idem., *Notes on Nepal* (1896, reprint, New Delhi, 1992), pp. III, 119-89.

¹¹ Major A.H. Bingley, *Handbook for the Indian Army: Sikhs* (1899, reprint, Chandigarh, 1970), pp. 39-107.

¹² P.D. Bonarjee, *A Handbook of the Fighting Races of India* (Calcutta, 1899); Betham, *Marathas and Dekhani Musulmans*, Field Marshal Earl Roberts, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to the Commander-in-Chief* (London, 1897, reprint, 1898), pp. 499, 532-34, 540.

There was constant intercourse between the army's ethnographers and the colonial anthropologists.¹³ H.H. Risley, the initiator of ethnography in India, influenced the conceptual framework of the Handbook writers. The methodological assumptions of his work *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, published in 1891, influenced Vansittart's analytical matrix. Risley even wrote the introduction of Vansittart's 1896 edition. Risley pointed out that the ethnographic programme had 2 aspects: recording the various social and cultural usages of the different groups, and a comparative analysis of human anatomy. The Victorian anthropologists like Risley believed that different races had separate physiological and moral qualities. The growth of anthropometry in Western Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries influenced colonial India's physical anthropologists. They were actually influenced by the anthropometric classification system of Paul Broca, the French ethnological expert. Risley accepted skull measurement as a technique of ethnic categorization. According to him, the basis of distinction among the different indigenous groups was the difference in physiognomy and bone structure. Risley claimed that the width of the head was related to racial origin. The data on the width of the heads of various groups was measured through the cephalic index. This showed the relation of the maximum breadth of the head to its maximum length, the latter being taken as 100. The higher the cephalic index, claimed Risley, the more the Mongolian blood. The cephalic index of the Limbus was 84.3 while that of the Murmis was 78.5. So the Limbus were regarded as more Mongolian than the Murmis. Vansittart considered the Mongolians to be good warriors. So, for recruitment, he favoured the Limbus rather than the

¹³ Mary Des Chene in 'Military Ethnology in British India', *South Asia Research*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1999), p. 126, writes that the Handbooks' authors were not interested in the methodologies propounded by the colonial anthropologists.

Murmis. Risley also arranged the various groups according to the nasomalar index. For Risley, people with thin noses belonged to higher racial categories. To measure the length and breadth of the noses the nasomalar index was used. This tool was first introduced by the anthropologist Oldfield Thomas for measuring the projections or depressions of the base of the noses of different people in relation to the outer edge of the orbit of the noses, which expressed in any particular group the preponderance of the Mongolian or Caucasian element. Longer and thinner noses gave a higher nasomalar index. Risley argued that higher the nasomalar index, the superior the race. The nasomalar index of the Newars was 110.2 and that of the Pathans was 117.1. So the Pathans were more favoured than the Newars for recruitment in the Indian Army.¹⁴

Baron Cuvier of Switzerland, and the German scholar S. T. Von Soemmering, felt that they had established a linkage between cranial cavity and intelligence. Bingley, while observing the Jats, accepted the view of Dr. Brereton, the author of the Rajputana Gazetteer, that the crania of the Jats were elongated and lower than those of the Brahmins. So the Brahmins had more intelligence, and were thus less suited for soldiering than the 'obtuse' Jats.¹⁵

However, the Handbook writers neglected many strands of anthropological thought. The late Victorian belief was that people with Mongolian features—broad

¹⁴ Vansittart, *Notes*, pp. I-X; Major G.F. MacMunn, *The Armies of India* (1911, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), pp. 145-54; Susan Bayly, 'Caste and "Race" in the Colonial Ethnography of India', in Peter Robb (ed), *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 170-72.

¹⁵ Major A.H. Bingley, *History, Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujars* (1899, reprint, New Delhi, 1986), p. III; Major A.H. Bingley and A. Nicholls, *Caste Handbooks for the Indian Army: Brahmins* (Simla, 1897), p. 43; Crispin Bates, 'Race, Caste and Tribe in Central India: The Early Origins of Indian Anthropometry', in Robb, *Race in South Asia*, pp. 219-34.

cheekbones and scanty beards and moustaches-were generally criminals. But Vansittart openly declared that such physical features existed among the Gurkhas and they were not only martial but also loyal.¹⁶ Denzil Ibbetson linked physique with racial theory. After comparing the facial features of the Rajputs and the Jats, he claimed that both the groups originated from the same racial stock. Bingley disagreed, claiming that ethnically the Rajputs were Scythians while the Jats were Aryans. But later, according to him, the Rajputs absorbed the Aryan culture.¹⁷

The Victorian belief was that certain climatic zones resulted in racial degeneration.¹⁸ James Wise and E. T. Dalton collected anthropometric data on the various castes and tribes inhabiting the differing ecological zones in India. The Handbook authors followed in their footsteps. The assumption of the Martial Race ideologues was that only tall and fair skinned men from colder mountainous regions were genetically suited to become fighters. The 19th century ethnologists like James Forbes, who argued that the inferior races had darker complexions, probably shaped Roberts' views. Forbes also claimed that south India's hot climate resulted in the degeneration of the races inhabiting that region. Roberts was also probably influenced by the Company's theoretician Robert Orme, whose ideas were in turn shaped by the Enlightenment theorist like Montesquieu. The latter assumed a linkage between the degeneration of the physical strength and temperament of the inhabitants with the climate. One representative of the Anti-Martial Race lobby, Rainey,

¹⁶ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 49; Rachel J. Tolen, 'Colonizing and Transforming the Criminal Tribesmen: The Salvation Army in India', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1991), pp. 106-25.

¹⁷ Bingley, *Sikhs*, p. 2.

¹⁸ Warwick Anderson, 'Disease, Race and Empire', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, vol. 70, no. 1 (1996), pp. 62-67.

challenged this linkage between climate and martialness. Rainey argued that the short and black Tamils were better soldiers than tall, 'smart' and 'better looking' men from cold northwest India. The Handbook authors appropriated this critique within their framework. Bingley had written that the submontane Himalayan tracts did not produce proper warriors. Further, he said that though central Punjab became very hot during summer, that region still nurtured the warrior Sikhs. The Handbook writers wanted the enlistment of varied groups-from tall, fair-skinned, thin-nosed Brahmins, to the short, dark-skinned tribals. Betham even argued that the shorter south Indian Marathas were better warriors than the taller races hailing from colder north India. The Handbook writers did not regard height as a reliable criterion for recruitment. All men between 5'2" to 5'9" were considered eligible for recruitment. Among the Gurkhas, the members from the Khas tribe were on the average 5'8" tall and the Gurungs were between 5'6 to 5'2" in height. But the latter were favoured. According to Betham and Pryor, the Deccanis were short and dark, with thick lips and high cheekbones. Yet they considered them better warriors than the north Indians with blue eyes and red lips. Also, valour and stamina were not always equated with good physique. Bingley and Nicholls accepted that the north Indian Brahmins were shorter than the Afghans were. But that did not mean, claimed these officers, that the former group was less courageous. Betham concluded that the popularity of the Pathans and the Punjabi Muslims was because of their superficial qualities: they were showy and dressed picturesquely. The groups like the Marathas, on the other hand, were quiet in demeanour and lacked swagger. So, according to Betham, their military qualities remained unrecognized.¹⁹

¹⁹ Sinharaja Tammita Delgoda, "'Nabob, Historian and Orientalist", Robert Orme: The Life and Career of an East India Company Servant (1728-1801)', *JRAS*, vol. 2 (1992), p. 365; V. Longer, *Red*

Evangelical protagonists like Reverend William Ward of the Serampore Mission used the category 'race' very loosely. The Handbooks' authors, like the Martial Race supporters, followed this trend. For Ward, both the Brahmin caste, as well as the other Hindus, appeared as a race. Such terminological and conceptual confusions were common among the Handbook writers. For Bingley and Nicholls, the Brahmins were simultaneously a race, a tribe and a caste. In Pryor's eyes, the Moplahs were low caste Hindus who were also tribals. After conversion, he claimed, they became a race. So besides biological origins, customs also determined the British concept of race. Bingley held that ethnically the Rajputs and the Jats were from the Scythian stock. But due to social factors, the Rajputs constituted a distinct ethnic group vis a vis the Jats. Occasionally, religion became the chief determinant. According to Bingley, Sikhism made Sikh Jats a different race from the Hindu Jats, though from the biological perspective both these groups were similar. At times race had a residential connotation. Vansittart termed the Gurkha tribes a race because they inhabited a particular tract of central Nepal. However such labels were flexible. In the last decade of the 19th century, as the British demand for the Gurkhas increased, Vansittart included the Limbus from eastern Nepal into the Gurkha category.²⁰

Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army, 1600-1947 (Bombay, 1974), p. 128; Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj: From the Great Indian Mutiny to Independence, 1858-1914* (London, 1989), p. 181; Susan Bayly, 'Colonial Ethnography', in Robb, *Race in South Asia*, pp. 173-73; Bingley, *Sikhs*, p. 144; idem., *Jats and Gujars*, pp. III, 32; idem., *Class Handbooks for the Indian Army: Dogras* (Simla, 1899), p. 19; Roberts, *Forty One Years*, pp. 499, 530, 532, 534; Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 74; idem., *Notes*, p. 99; Betham, *Marathas and Dekhani Musulmans*, pp. 76, 115; Bingley and Nicholls, *Brahmins*, pp. 43, 52; Lieutenant R.M. Rainey, 'The Madras Army', *JUSII*, vol. 20, no. 85 (1891), pp. 79-86.

²⁰ For the loose use of the term race by the Martial Race theorists see pp. 38-39 of Ch. 1. Bingley and Nicholls, *Brahmins*, pp. 11, 43; Pryor, *Moplahs*, Preface, p. 17; Bingley, *Sikhs*, pp. 2, 18, 50-54; idem.,

Besides observing the bone structure and the skin colour, the military ethnographers also followed the other dictum of the colonial anthropologists in observing the behavioural patterns and the social mores of the various groups. On what sort of sources did they depend for this?

The Handbook authors utilized both Indian and British sources. Among the latter, both unofficial and official sources were used. Census reports, especially those of 1881 and 1891, were considered for analyzing the demographic patterns. For general information on habitats, the Gazetteers were consulted. It seems that the Raj undertook the project of census surveys and the Gazetteer-writing programme to satisfy the army's hunger for knowing the colonized. What the individual officers tried to do before the origin of the Handbook project, the Handbook writers did more efficiently with the aid of census data. They calculated the male population of the probable group of recruits in different districts, which were then subdivided into tehsils and taluks. This shows that the imperialists had travelled a long way from the position of the enquiry committee of 1859, when the military elites failed to demarcate the various recruiting regions clearly. The improvement of the grassroots level knowledge of the colonial state in the late 19th century was proved clearly by Vansittart's ability to calculate the number of villages in Nepal.²¹

For precise information about the activities of the various groups, the histories of the colonial historians like Lane Poole and Lepel Griffin came in handy. These sources can be categorized as ethnohistories, as the European observers noted down

Jats and Gujars, p. 31; idem., *Handbook on Rajputs* (1899, reprint, New Delhi, 1986), p. 28; Susan Bayly, 'Colonial Ethnography', in Robb, *Race in South Asia*, pp. 176-78.

²¹ Vansittart, *Handbooks*, Appendix C, p. 28; Bingley, *Sikhs*, Appendix A, pp. i-vi, 41-58; *Supplementary report*, p. 27.

the food habits, dress, marriage customs etc of the various groups they encountered. The Europeans wrote similar accounts when they first came into contact with the tribes of the New World in the 16th century. Such ethnohistories constituted the building block of the army's ethnological programme in India. The Handbook writers used such works to trace the histories of the groups concerned. Those communities which had displayed 'martial' proclivities, were deemed warlike enough to be inducted in the army. The underlying assumption was that those who had displayed martial qualities in the past still retained these virtues. In accordance with the Victorian intellectual currents, the army officers were firm believers in heredity. The perspective of the British historians who operated in colonial India was communal- the Islamic invasion was held to create disorder in the Indian society. The Handbook authors accepted the view that Islamic religious intolerance turned the peaceful Hindu cultivators like the Jats and the Marathas into warriors. Bingley accepted Lane Poole's portrait of Aurangzeb as a villain, whose policies were blamed for causing the alienation of the loyal and martial Rajputs. Bingley compared Aurangzeb's erroneous policy with the Raj's 'foolish' pre 1857 policy, that forced these warriors to rebel.²²

Since the focus of the Handbook authors was on the groups inhabiting particular regions, they consulted regional histories also. While compiling data on the Rajputs of Rajputana, Bingley depended on Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan*. To grasp the interactions among the various groups, the officers writing the Handbooks also depended on extra-regional histories. Most of these histories were written by the Raj's civilian officers. D. Wright, a doctor, wrote the *History of Nepal* in 1877 and

²² Jonathan Haas and Winifred Creamer, 'Warfare among the Pueblos: Myth, History, and Ethnography', *Ethnohistory*, vol. 44, no. 2 (1997), pp. 240-49; Bingley, *Rajputs*, pp. 12-16; Vansittart, *Notes*, p. III.

Vansittart depended on it. So an intense collaboration between the army and the Raj's civilian apparatus, for gathering data on the Orient, was a characteristic of the last decade of the 19th century. The army probably hated to depend on the civilians. One can infer that to forego this dependence, and also to increase the army's information about the various indigenous communities, the military ordered its officers like Lieutenant F.G. Cardew to start writing histories of British India.²³

Though European writings were more readily accessible, the writers of the Handbooks did not depend only on Occidental sources to understand the Orient. Vansittart used Sarat Chandra Das' account of his journey to Lhasa and central Tibet, published in 1901, for information about the tribes of eastern Nepal. Both the Hindu and the Muslim authors were utilized. The project of translation of various vernacular works received a strong impetus from the army's demand to know more about India. *Tahafat ul Mujahidin* was translated by Rowlandson and used by Pryor. To understand the religious mentality of the 'martial races' like the Sikhs, Bingley depended both on the European writer Newall's *Notes on the Hindu Religion*, and also on an indigenous work like the *Adi Granth*, which was translated by Trump. From the latter, he concluded that Sikhism was a martial religion, and hence its followers were also martial.²⁴

The Handbook writers also spoke to sepoys about the Indian society. The data they acquired was thus filtered through the minds of the colonized. Havildar Purandhoj Limbu of the 2nd Battalion of the 9th Gurkha Rifles aided Vansittart in

²³ Vansittart, *Notes*, pp. III, 1; Bingley, *Rajputs*, Sources; Lieutenant F.G. Cardew, *A Sketch of the Services of the Bengal Native Army to the Year 1895* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1971).

²⁴ Vansittart, *Notes*, pp. I, III; Pryor, *Moplahs*, List of some authorities; Bingley, *Sikhs*, Authorities consulted in the preparation of this work, pp. 71-105.

classifying the tribes and clans of eastern Nepal. Jemadar Assaram of the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Gurkhas also collected ethnographic data for Vansittart. Besides the Indian officers, the Indian privates also supplied information, which in turn was cross-checked with the information contained in the books written by the Europeans. In 1889, 3 recruits asserted before Vansittart that they belonged to the Jail clan of the Magar tribe. Information about this clan was absent in the books written by the British.²⁵

The Handbook authors also made use of the folk tradition and local proverbs which provided both positive and negative images of the various communities. One proverb which was quoted by Bingley, was as follows

The dog and cat, Ranghars and Gujar,
If it were not for these four, you might
sleep with your doors open.²⁶

Such legends might have created a negative image about the Gujar in the imperial mind. The imperialists came to accept them as dacoits and as a result their recruitment suffered. Among the women of the Jangwara clan of the Jats, this couplet was common:

Below is earth, above is Ram
Between the two, fights Dhopu Ram.

Bingley used this couplet to infer that the Jats were soldier-like. He also accepted the interpretation common in Indian society that the Jats were 'thick-headed fools'. However this fitted well with the assumption of the spokesmen of the Martial Race

²⁵ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 61; *idem.*, *Notes*, pp. I, III.

²⁶ Bingley, *Jats and Gujars*, p. 38.

lobby like Major G.F. MacMunn, who emerged after Bingley, that proper soldiers need not be intellectually strong.²⁷

Occasionally the Handbooks' authors accepted indigenous myths and legends about the biological origin of the various groups. Bingley accepted the legend that the Jats were descendants of the Jadu Rajputs. This interpretation was different from that propounded by the European scholars, that the Jats were related to the Scythians.²⁸

The Handbook authors' believed that Indian society was changing, both due to internally generated changes, and the influence of British administration. Bingley had written that the Jats moved into central Punjab about 800 years ago and accepted Sikhism later. This, according to him, was an example of indigenous social dynamics. The officers viewed the British administration also as changing the occupation and culture of a group. After 1857, the Meerut canal irrigation transformed the Gujars from cow raiders into 'peaceful' agriculturists.²⁹ This belief that British rule could transform various communities into proper soldier-like materials was consistent with the assumption of the military officers turned ethnologists like Barrow, who functioned before the Handbook project. They were probably trying to absorb the Anti-Martial Race lobby's scheme of social engineering.

Warwick Anderson has shown that the dominant scientific belief in the 19th century West was that some races, due to their sanitation practices and food habits, developed physiological immunities to certain sorts of diseases. Their cultural habits

²⁷ Ibid., p. 43. The couplet is from pp. 18-19; MacMunn, *The Armies*, p. 136.

²⁸ Bingley, *Jats and Gujars*, pp. 9-12, 38, 92.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 46, 48; Bingley, *Sikhs*, p. 15.

were determined by race.³⁰ The Handbook authors accepted this 'scientific' strand. They further divided Indian ecology to find out which groups fared best in which physical environment.

Some Handbook writers, like the Martial Race ideologues, established a connection between the physical features of the terrain, on the one hand, and the value system, work ethic, occupation and combat capacities of the inhabitants, on the other. Captain R.W. Falcon, who was a recruiting officer in the 4th Sikh Infantry, specialized on the Punjabis. He believed that the physical surroundings influenced the cultural make up of the inhabitants. He pointed out that the characteristics of the Sikhs like hardiness, boldness, independence of spirit etc which made them good warriors, depended not only on the race and religion, but also on the regions which bred them. He continued that hereditary traits interacted with terrain and climate. Moreover, qualities like bravery and obedience varied with region.³¹ According to Bingley, a damp riverine climate produced unmartial inhabitants, because the presence of fertile plains and river valleys resulted in bumper crops without effort. The underlying logic was that in the fertile areas, agriculture was not laborious. So the people became easygoing, indolent, and their physique declined. The Handbook writers were convinced that the endurance learned through manual labour was an essential quality of soldiering. In ecological zones like unirrigated plains and hilly regions, the

³⁰ Warwick Anderson, 'Immunities of Empire: Race, Disease, and the New Tropical Medicine, 1900-1920', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, vol. 70, no. 1 (1996), pp. 94-118.

³¹ Roberts, *Forty One Years*, pp. 499, 530, 532, 534; Captain R.W. Falcon, *Handbook on Sikhs for the use of Regimental Officers* (Allahabad, 1896), pp. 61, 65, 68. The view that physical culture shaped the soldiers' mentality is common among a group of modern historians. One British historian, R. Overy assumes that the Russian soldiers were capable of accepting an enormous amount of stress and strain because the climate and the terrain in which they grew up was harsh. Richard Overy, *Russia's War* (1997, reprint, London, 1998), p. XVII.

inhabitants were forced to work hard to get frugal meals. So they became inured to hardship, and hence were good material for the army. Bingley warned that the Sikhs inhabiting the fertile doab region of Punjab, known as Doaba Sikhs, were worse than the Malwa Sikhs who were from the infertile cis Sutlej area. The latter, by their sheer labour, had transformed the unirrigated central Punjab into a prosperous area. They had thus acquired the qualities of hardihood and honesty which were necessary for being good troops. So he recommended the enlistment of the Malwa Sikhs. Vansittart demanded that the recruits' families must own their own lands. Bingley was for recruitment of the tillers. He noted that the Jats of the Bikaner desert below Ferozepur tilled the lands of the Rajput zamindars and had the qualities of patience and endurance, the necessary components in the making of warriors. He argued that the small peasants, unlike the rich farmers, were industrious and disciplined. As prosperous peasants like the Jats of northern Rajputana were not interested in joining the colonial war machine, Bingley dubbed them as unmartial.³²

The Sikhs were a martial community for the British, who therefore assumed that all the Sikhs ought to be willing to join the Indian Army. But many British officers found that the Sikhs from the agriculturally prosperous area of the Jullundhur doab preferred to remain as farmers rather than following the arduous career of soldiering. Most of the Sikh recruits came from the agrarian deficit area of Beas and the region around Tarn Tarn.³³ This contradiction between reality and ideology the imperialist tried to explain through an amalgam of ecological and cultural factors.

³² Bingley, *Sikhs*, pp. 5, 11, 14-15, 30, 39, 45-46; idem., *Jats and Gujars*, pp. 14, 28, 42, 97-98; Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 82, 91.

³³ Memorandum by Norman on the distribution of the armies in India, para 19, 26 Sept. 1872, Notes of a tour by Norman, Nov. 1871, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

• The Handbook authors were unable to tap the economically prosperous zones. Some were also against recruiting from the economic deficit zones. In Vansittart's view, the Terai ecology did not produce enough food for the proper development of the muscles and bones of the inhabitants. So he was against the enlistment of the groups like the Tharus inhabiting that region.³⁴

Bingley believed that the Jats who inhabited the drier parts of Punjab were healthier than those Jats who came from the damp and swampy areas of the western Gangetic doab. Pryor was for the enlistment of the Moplahs living far away from the coast because they were considered healthier than those Moplahs inhabiting the coast. Pryor claimed that this was because, due to the low water supply in the coastal area of Malabar, the diseases like dropsy and dysentery were very common.³⁵

The 19th century West believed that the consumption of meat was necessary for good health. The Handbook authors constructed a linkage between dietary habits and the martial capabilities. They equated vegetarianism with weakness. Bingley and Nicholls said that only those Brahmins, who ate fowl and goats, were to be recruited. The Raghubansis, a subgroup of the Rajputs, though being small farmers, were not enlisted because they were vegetarian.³⁶

Another strand of contemporary medical thinking, which influenced the officers, was that many 'races' degenerated due to unsanitary practices and immoral

³⁴ Vansittart, *Notes*, pp. 59-60, 116-17.

³⁵ Bingley, *Jats and Gujars*, p. 32; Pryor, *Moplahs*, pp.16-17.

³⁶ Mark Finlay, 'Quackery and Cookery: Justus Von Liebig's Extract of Meat and the Theory of Nutrition in the Victorian Age', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, vol. 66 (1992), pp. 404-11; Bingley, *Rajputs*, p. 115; Bingley and Nicholls, *Brahmins*, p. 14.

conduct. Many Handbook authors emphasized the personal hygiene and morality of the members of the groups concerned. As far as these aspects were concerned, Bingley and Nicholls concluded that the North Indian Brahmins were a model race. The officers emphasized that the recruits should enjoy stable family lives, they must be free from debauchery and their dress ought to be decent. Betham pointed out that the Deccani Muslims had the habit of going to prostitutes, and so they frequently suffered from venereal diseases. This factor somewhat obstructed the recruitment of the Deccani Muslims, because the military saw red where venereal diseases were concerned, due to their devastating effects on the European troops in India. However this argument was not carried too far. The Gurkhas were regarded as dirty, but were enlisted. In general, the Handbook writers felt that those groups which engaged in outdoor sports had well developed limbs, which aided them in battle. So the officers were encouraged to popularize hockey and kabbadi among the groups which supplied military manpower.³⁷

The Handbook authors linked occupational backgrounds to cultural traits. They believed that particular sorts of professions gave rise to particular types of mentalities. Most of the writers accepted that the agriculturists constituted the best soldierly materials. This belief was common among the Martial Race ideologues too. However, unlike the Martial Race spokesmen, the Handbook writers were willing to recruit men from non-agrarian backgrounds due to the demand-supply gap. Bingley upheld the case of recruitment of the distillers in the army. The Newars and the Khambus were landowners and cultivators of Nepal, but as they were not interested in

³⁷ Mark Harrison, *Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian Preventive Medicine, 1859-1914* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 36-49, 60-98; Betham, *Marathas and Dekhani Muslims*, pp. 48, 78, 113; Bingley, *Jats and Gujars*, pp. 170-71; Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 49.

soldiering, Vansittart had to look towards communities practicing other occupations, like the Limbus who were *shikaris* (hunters). Martial qualities were believed to be inherited and socially derived. Vansittart believed that the Limbus, being hunters for generations, were acquainted with forests and would prove to be excellent light infantry for fighting in the hilly forest terrain.³⁸

Men from occupations which demanded very low intellectual skills were generally favoured. This was because the Handbook authors wanted the recruits to be as honest and simple as children. The cultivating groups were favoured because the level of education was very low among them. The Jats were one of the most favoured 'martial' groups. Within that community, only the village headmen were literate. The Jats were seen as fools. The members of the Raibdar clan of the Jat community were considered famous for their stupidity and they were intensively enlisted. Among the Moplahs, another potential 'martial race', only 1 in 1000 could sign their names. The British probably understood that it was more difficult to control men with education. Bingley and Nicholls were against those Brahmins who were literate, because they feared that they would indulge in intrigues, which would adversely affect the army's discipline. Only those Brahmins who were illiterate were considered to be engaged in agriculture and were inducted. The Aroras of Punjab were generally contractors and traders. As their occupation was considered to demand too many brains, they were not enlisted.³⁹

³⁸ Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green*, p. 128; Bingley, *Jats and Gujars*, p. 38; idem., *Sikhs*, pp. 57-58; Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 6, 39-41, 64-66.

³⁹ Bingley, *Sikhs*, pp. 53-56; idem., *Jats and Gujars*, pp. 43, 93, Bingley and Nicholls, *Brahmins*, p. 21; Pryor, *Moplahs*, p. 52.

Prosperous professions were dubbed non-military by the Handbook authors, probably because men following such occupations were not interested in joining the military. The members of Agrai tribe in Nepal worked in the mines and were affluent, so Vansittart considered them as unmartial. The Handbook authors were unwilling to recruit from those professions which were looked down by the Indians. After all, the army was the principal coercive apparatus of the Raj. And if the armed personnel lacked prestige in the society, then indirectly the Raj's prestige would also suffer. Probably for this reason those Deccani Muslims who were shoemakers or dyers, and were looked down on in the Indian society, were not recruited in the army.⁴⁰ This was an instance of Indian value systems shaping imperial policy.

Like the Martial Race theorists, the writers of the Handbooks were against enlistment from the cities. Bingley was against inducting men from the urban centres like Mathura and Agra. Why did they believe that the city populace had degenerated? Probably because the urban centres provided job opportunities to the proletariat. Hence the proletariat could afford to shy away from the army. The officers tried to justify this fact, by arguing that such men's instincts were unmartial. Secondly, officers like Betham felt that the urban populace was disease ridden because its sanitary conditions were horrible. Contemporary medical science, under the influence of the 'Germ Theory', accepted that the urban populace was in general diseased. From the end of the 19th century onwards, the British military establishment in the United Kingdom was also convinced that the peasant recruits were hardier than those from

⁴⁰ Betham, *Marathas and Dekhani Musulmans*, pp. 117-19; Bingley, *Sikhs*, pp. 53-58; Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 69, 86, 91.

the industrial cities.⁴¹ Probably all these strand of ideas influenced the British military elites in India.

The Handbook authors very strongly emphasized the linkages between the demographic distribution of the communities and the prospect of their recruitment due to the theories of race and to satisfy the quantitative demands of the army. From the Brahmins of north India, Bingley and Nicholls were for enlistment of only the Gaur Brahmins. Among them, only the Kanhoujiyas and Saraswat clans were allowed to join the army, because they practiced agriculture. Their recruiting ground was demarcated as the area around the Yamuna, Pilibhit, Chambal and Mathura. The recruiting base of the Ahirs was very narrow. Bingley only wanted the Jadubans Ahirs from Gurgaon district in the army.⁴²

Falcon pointed out that the Sikhs were to be recruited only from those districts of Punjab where they constituted a majority. He warned that those Sikhs who were a minority in certain districts were racially rotten. This was because they were actually immigrants and married unmartial groups after settling down. So the immigrant Sikhs' racial purity was destroyed. Hence they ought to be shunned in the army. Falcon provided a list of the Sikh majority areas like Tarn Tarn tehsil in Amritsar,

⁴¹ Nancy Tomes, 'The Private side of Public Health: Sanitary Science, Domestic Hygiene, and the Germ Theory, 1870-1900', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, vol. 64, no. 4 (1990), pp. 509-12; Matthew Handley, "'Help Us to Secure a Strong, Healthy, Prosperous and Peaceful Britain": The Social Arguments of the Campaign for Compulsory Military Service in Britain, 1899-1914', *CJH*, vol. 25, no. 2 (1995), pp. 262-79; Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green*, p. 128; Bingley, *Rajputs*, Appendix B, p. 29; Betham, *Marathas and Dekhani Musulmans*, pp. 156-67.

⁴² Major A.H. Bingley, *Caste Handbooks for the Indian Army: Jats, Gujars and Ahirs* (Calcutta, 1904), pp. 22-29, 30-31, 35; Bingley and Nicholls, *Brahmins*, pp. 22-29, 30-31, 35.

from where recruitment ought to proceed, and Sikh minority areas like Sharakpur tehsil in Lahore district, which ought to be avoided.⁴³

Punjab was the most important recruiting ground for the Raj. So Bingley accumulated demographic data on that region. He calculated that the land of the 5 rivers supported 1000000 Jat Sikhs, 1000000 Brahmins and 1,500,000 Rajputs. Of the latter two groups, only 7,600 and 20,000 had accepted Sikhism. Then there were 447000 Khatri but only 52,000 among them were Sikhs. As the Brahmin, Rajput and the Khatri Sikhs were minorities in Punjab and the Jat Sikhs were the majority, in accordance with Falcon's dictum, only the Jat Sikhs were enlisted. To aid the regiments in recruiting, the male population of each district was calculated. Bingley found that Patiala and Ferozepur were most densely populated with Sikhs. The former had 250,000 male Sikhs in 1891.⁴⁴

III

Effects

What was the impact of this discourse by the Handbook authors on the Indian Army's recruitment policy? In the first decade of the 20th century the imperialists attempted to balance the various Hindu and Muslim groups within the regiments. It seems that this was the effect of the Handbook authors' communal interpretation of Indian history, which like an oil slick spread outwards, from the officers authoring the Handbooks to the army in general. At the micro level, the Madrassis who were dubbed unmartial were discharged and the favourite 'martial' races from northwest India filled their

⁴³ Falcon, *Handbook on Sikhs*, pp. 61, 69.

⁴⁴ Bingley, *Sikhs*, Appendix A, pp. I-II, VI, 41, 49, 53.

place. In 1902, the 7th, 9th, and the 14th Madras Infantry regiments were replaced with the Punjabi Muslims and the Sikhs. Only the Jat Sikhs who were engaged in agriculture were enlisted,⁴⁵ probably in accordance with the dictum of Falcon and Bingley. Bingley did not favour the north Indian Rajputs much. Probably for this reason, in the beginning of the 20th century, the axe fell on them. The 12th Bengal Infantry Regiment was ordered to replace its Rajput personnel from north India with Hindu Jats and Lobana Sikhs. The Hyderabad Contingent's cavalry was ordered to recruit the Deccani Muslims.⁴⁶ The Deccani Muslims came into prominence because Betham spearheaded their cause.

All these had their effects at the macro level. Between 1885 and 1912, as the Indian Army expanded from 130,000 to 158,000 men, the groups favoured by the Handbook writers increased their share significantly. The Jats were virtually absent in the army in the 1880s. After Bingley sponsored their cause, they numbered 9,670 men just before the First World War.⁴⁷ From table 7 it is evident that as the imperial demand for the Gurkhas increased, along with the Magars and the Gurungs, the eastern tribes from Nepal were also inducted in larger numbers. The share of the tribes of eastern Nepal in the overall Gurkha contingent absorbed from Nepal increased with time. In 1890-91, their share was only 12.5%, and in 1892-93 it rose to 30.1%. By 1895, the eastern Nepali tribes' share jumped to 44.1%.⁴⁸ We must

⁴⁵ *Army committee*, vol. 3, pp. 895-96; G.O. no. 828, 12 Sept. 1902, N.A.I.

⁴⁶ Bingley, *Rajputs*, Appendix A and B, p. 29; G.O. nos. 79, 236, 30 Jan. 1903, 27 March 1903.

⁴⁷ *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 156.

⁴⁸ Vansittart, *Notes*, pp. 7-8. See also table 7.

remember that Vansittart in the later editions of his book, also included the tribes from eastern Nepal within his construct of the Gurkhas.

The Handbook authors made the Martial Race theory more complex. In Roberts' paradigm, which evolved in the late 19th century, the Jats were not regarded as a martial group. But Bingley wrote a monograph on the Jats. Roberts' supporters like Goodenough and Dalton then approved of their recruitment, but only from northwest India. Nevertheless Betham upheld the cause of the Marathas inhabiting the area south of the Vindhya. MacMunn, an early 20th century votary of the Martial Race concept, accepted the Jats and the Marathas as martial communities.⁴⁹ Again Roberts was not preoccupied with the connection between 'warrior' instinct and dietary norms. After Bingley and Nicholls propounded this linkage, Goodenough and Dalton also came to accept it.⁵⁰ So the Handbook authors were able to introduce significant policy shifts in the recruitment programme.

⁴⁹ MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp. 159-62, 165-68.

⁵⁰ See page 29.

Table 7: Volume-cum-Region-wise Recruitment of the Gurkhas

Year	Central Magars	Nepal Gurungs	Total Numbers Enlisted from Central Nepal	Total Numbers of Sunwars, Limbus and Rais Recruited from Eastern Nepal	Grand Total
1884-85			657		657
1886-87			1082		1082
1887-88			1025		1025
1888-89	622	226	848	24	872
1889-90	725	264	989	18	1007
1890-91	1064	433	1497	392	1889
1891-92	926	371	1297	489	1786
1892-93	613	353	966	766	1732
1893-94	485	287	772	959	1731
1894-95	498	247	745	1121	1866

Sources: Captain Eden Vansittart, *The Gurkhas* (1890, reprint, New Delhi, 1980), Appendix III, p. 99; Purushottam Banskota, *The Gurkha Connection: A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British Indian Army* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 86-87, 121.

Conclusion

One of the principal proponents of the Martial Race ideology, the Handbook authors were highly influenced by contemporary Western intellectual trends. However, the construction of the discourse on the Orient was not a one way process. The fables and folk traditions of the subcontinent, along with its Indian agents, played their parts in the construction of this hegemonic discourse. Hence the British Indian Army and the indigenous society played a dialectical game in the creation of the stereotypes about the various warrior groups. Mark Harrison's argument that findings in the colonies strengthened the racial biological thinking in the metropole⁵¹ may be applicable in the case of Indian Army's ethnographic project. Victorian eugenics, medical geography, phrenology and anthropometry influenced the military ethnologists in India. The latter's findings probably further strengthened the imperial pseudo-sciences.

Although the military played a vital role in ruling India, historians have neglected the army's images about the Indian society. As is evident from this essay, the army's thought process had many shades which could not be accommodated within the three tier ideological structure of the Raj as chalked out by Eric Stokes.⁵² The Handbook project was not a part of Orientalism, Evangelicalism or Utilitarianism. Edward Said has opened our eyes to the imperial construction of Orientalism. But as far as India was concerned, the scholars miss out the army's contribution in the creation of this discourse and the various complexities of Military Orientalism. Caplan has pointed out that the imperial discourse on the Gurkhas

⁵¹ Mark Harrison, "'The Tender Frame of Man': Disease, Climate, and Racial Difference in India and the West Indies, 1760-1860', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, vol. 70, no. 1 (1996), p. 93.

⁵² Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (1959, reprint, New Delhi, 1992).

constituted a different sort of Orientalism from that constructed by Said or Ronald Inden.⁵³ From the Handbooks, we have seen that the imperial theorization on the other 'martial' groups like the Sikhs and the Jats differed a lot from their discourse on the Gurkhas. Hence the army's view of the Orient was not an undifferentiated one.

The aim of the military's ethnographic discourse was different from that carried out by the colonial government. The latter project laid emphasis on the groups whom the colonial government wanted to make powerless.⁵⁴ But the army's discourse focused on those who were considered socially powerful, and hence ought to be recruited in the army. However, in the long run, the British programme to chalk out the racial landscape of the subcontinent proved to be a hindrance. The military establishment needed to interpret the social and demographic data to operate in an alien landscape. The Handbook authors were small men lost in the Indian society. Their procedure was self-defeating because the logic behind their categorization of the inhabitants of South Asia was that each group had a particular turn of mind and inner qualities which they were predisposed to exhibit. They believed in the characteristics of their favoured communities. But all their achievements were not in vain. The corpus of knowledge about the Indians at the colonial state's disposal registered a quantum jump. But the very selectivity about enlistment which the Handbook authors displayed proved to be a great weakness. The social and territorial bases of recruitment could not be really broad based though some officers belonging to the Anti-Martial Race lobby felt the need for them to be, in case mass mobilization

⁵³ Lionel Caplan, "'Bravest of the Brave': Representations of 'The Gurkha' in British Military Writings", *MAS*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1991), pp. 571-97.

⁵⁴ Rashmi Pant, 'The Cognitive Status of Caste in Colonial Ethnography: A Review of Some Literature on the North West Provinces and Oudh', *IJESHR*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1987), p. 161.

became necessary during an attritional war. The army became so obsessed with their 'martial' groups that recruitment became unbalanced. The force became dependent on only a few communities hailing from a very narrow tract of India. Alarm bells were ringing in 1913 over the issue of overdependence on the Punjabis. But by then it was too late. The First World War intervened and blood, death and disaster overwhelmed the Raj.

Chapter 4

Logistics and the Construction of Loyalty: The Welfare Mechanism

The British military domination of the subcontinent was mainly possible because Indians joined the colonial army and remained loyal to it. This was partly because the British introduced an innovative bureaucratic structure for constructing the colonial military. One of the principal elements introduced by the British for structuring the army, was the welfare package for the soldiers. This package included a series of incentives with which the imperialists' attempted to purchase the soldiers loyalty. This policy enabled the colonial army to attract and retain Indian manpower and to prevent any large-scale military rebellion after 1857. The incentives offered to the soldiers probably created bonds of loyalty between the troops and the army's high command. An impersonal loyalty structure replaced the personal loyalty of the soldiers to their clan and tribal chiefs, which was present in pre British armies.¹

The British conquest of India was mainly possible because of the low military effectiveness of the Indian potentates' military forces. In India, the jagirdars (landlords) were responsible for raising military contingents in exchange for the assignment of land revenue by the monarchies. Since the jagirdars enlisted and maintained the troops who were from their own clans, the soldiers were loyal to them. In the Rajput Army, the jagirs were more or less hereditary. When the jagirdars died, then their sons served in the force and

¹ William Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls: Its Organization and Administration* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1962), pp. 3-27, 36-44, 296-300.

enjoyed the revenue assignments, even if they were incompetent.² This hereditary principle implied the absence of professionalism. Due to the absence of a regular bureaucracy, the welfare schemes for the soldiers remained *ad hoc*, and the jagirdars lined their pockets. The lack of cohesiveness of these forces was because the distribution of rewards in such armies remained chaotic. Pay and pension remained in arrears. Medical facilities and the commissariats were non-existent. Promotions were based on nepotism. To avert defeat, Mahadji Sindia and Ranjit Singh tried to Europeanize their armies by bureaucratizing the distribution of incentives to the soldiers. They tried to eliminate the jagirdars and bring the armies under their direct administration, so that the soldiers would be loyal to the state. But their reforms were too few and too late.³

To construct the Indian Army, the British depended on two sources: the professional military forces of Europe, and indigenous military traditions. One of the chief instruments, which enabled the British to craft a new type of army, was the systematic supply of incentives to the soldiers. The British imitated these incentives from the Western standing armies. The professional armies, which emerged in the West from 1700 onwards, had regular wages, graduated-wage scales, uniforms, and a hierarchy of ranks. The state

² R.K. Saxena, *The Army of the Rajputs: A Study of 18th Century Rajputana* (Udaipur, 1989), pp. 2, 15, 23.

³ Lewis Ferdinand Smith, *A Sketch of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the Regular Corps Formed and Commanded by the Europeans in the Service of the Native Princes of India with Details of the Principal Events and Actions of the late Maratha War* (Calcutta, 1805); Herbert Compton, *A Particular Account of the European Military Adventurers of Hindustan from 1784-1803* (1892, reprint, Oxford, 1976); B.K. Sinha, *The Pindaris: 1798-1818* (Calcutta, 1971), pp.4-5, 15-16, 184-85; Henry Steinbach, *The Country of the Sikhs* (n.d., reprint, New Delhi 1977), pp.28-29, 72-86; Fauja Singh Bajwa, *Military System of the Sikhs: 1799-1849* (New Delhi, 1964).

took over from the private contractors the responsibilities of feeding, clothing and equipping the military personnel. This introduced the concept of contract between the impersonal armed forces' establishments and the military labourers, which replaced the feudal concept of hereditary service among the landlords and the retainers. As the troops shifted their loyalty from the intermediary lords to the polities, the armies from quasi-private enterprises became public institutions.⁴ A similar transformation in the armed forces occurred in India. However the colonial setting modified some of the incentives which were provided to the troops. Since the British could not utilize Indian soldiers' national sentiment, it became very important to supply them with monetary and non-monetary incentives, at the right time and right place, and in adequate quantities. So the colonial army created an administrative machinery to provide various types of rewards to the soldiers. The bureaucratic mechanism was geared towards supplying items for the troops' welfare, is called here the 'welfare mechanism'. The welfare bureaucracy was flexible, and responded to the soldiers' grievances. We can infer that by caring for its personnel, the army integrated the troops and prevented desertions, mutinies and treacheries that were endemic in the pre colonial militias.

The term logistics is used to mean the incentives supplied for the soldiers' creature comforts. The interdependence of logistics and loyalty is yet to be analyzed thoroughly in the context of either international, or Indian military history. C. Jones shows that the *Ancien Regime* was able to attract volunteers and boost their morale in combat by providing health care, accommodation etc. J.A. Lynn writes that when the soldiers had no sympathy with the

⁴ Martin Blumenson, 'The Development of the Modern Military', *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1980), pp.670-82; Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495-1715*(London, 1992, reprint, 1997), p.80.

cause for which they fought, it was necessary to buy their obedience with pay and food. His observation is all the more applicable to the colonial army, as the sepoys were volunteers with no attachment to the imperial cause. L.M. Crowell briefly describes the administrative structure of the Madras Army's logistics, but fails to link it with the soldiers' loyalty. Tai Yong Tan shows the welfare measures introduced to prevent disturbances among the ex-soldiers, and to strengthen the loyalty of the serving troops in Punjab after World War I.⁵

This chapter analyzes the welfare package offered by the imperialists to the soldiers. Section I shows the varied types of tangible goods and non-tangible incentives supplied to the soldiers. Section II portrays the relationship between logistics and discipline. The next section points out the linkages between the military-financial interests of the Raj and the welfare bureaucracy. The fourth section charts the varied facets of the bureaucratic machinery oriented towards the soldiers' benefits, and the last section paints the imperial response to popular grievances.

I

Benefits available to the Soldiers

The imperial aim was to raise the combat efficiency of the army by inculcating bravery and loyalty among the rank and file. The British assumption was that valour and faithfulness

⁵ Colin Jones, 'The Welfare of the French Foot Soldiers', *History*, vol. LXV (1980), pp.193-213; J.A. Lynn, 'The History of Logistics and Supplying War', in idem., (ed), *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Colorado and Boulder, 1993), pp.23-24; Lorenzo M. Crowell, 'Logistics in the Madras Army circa 1830', *War & Society*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1992), pp.1-33; Tai Yong Tan 'Maintaining the Military Districts: Civil-Military Integration and the District Soldiers' Boards in the Punjab, 1919-1930', *MAS*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1994), pp. 833-74.

could be awakened and sustained by distributing rewards among the troops. So they provided a series of benefits which were absent in the pre British armed forces. The incentive scheme evolved from the late 18th century onwards, and underwent modifications and expansion in the 1857 Mutiny's aftermath. Greater rewards were reaped by the units destined for the battle zones and overseas service as those activities involved greater stress and strain, long separation from families and physical hardships.

Tangible benefits can be classified into monetary and non-monetary incentives. The most important monetary benefits were wages. The Indian Army, from the late 18th century onwards, paid the soldiers regularly in cash, because the British assumed that such continuity and regularity gave the troops a sense of loyalty, in other words that their sense of security tied them to the army. Paying salaries punctually in cash was an important innovation introduced by the British in the subcontinent. Even in the 19th century, Nepal, though trying to model her troops on the West, paid them by granting land. Many months of arrears of pay were common in the Khalsa Army, and caused successive mutinies. Extra money was allotted to the colonial soldiers for encouraging overseas service. After 1859, those irregular cavalry units which went to Aden, had their pay increased by one-third.⁶

Were the wages of privates adequate? One School of opinion which, includes Clive Dewey and David Omissi, argues that the soldiers' pay was so high that they were able to

⁶ Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry: Its Organisation and Discipline, 1796-1852* (Calcutta, 1962), pp.139-40; H.L.O. Garrett (ed), C. Grey, *European Adventurers of Northern India, 1785-1849*, (1929, reprint, Madras, 1993), p.29. Lieutenant Colonel Eden Vansittart, *Handbooks for the Indian Army: The Gurkhas* (Calcutta, 1906), p. 44; Major D.M. Probyn, commandant of 1st Sikh Cavalry, to Colonel W. Mayhew, Adjutant General, Calcutta, Progs. no. 594, 14 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Major General J. Michael, Commanding at Aden, to the Adjutant General of the Bombay Army, camp Mhow, Progs. no. 143, 6 Sept. 1859, M.D.P. March 1860, N.A.I.

save a lot from their wages. They sent their savings home, and these remittances reinvigorated the rural economy. R.G. Fox argues that the small peasants sent their younger sons to the army to supplement their families' income.⁷ But others point out that the soldiers' pay was inadequate even for the basic amenities of life.⁸ The salaries of the privates were actually adequate only for the basic necessities of life. Till 1911, the privates were paid Rs 7 per month. In 1861, the government had to spend Rs 9 per month for each soldier's ration. The commissariat did not supply the soldiers except in abnormal times. Even if we assume that the privates took a less varied diet than that provided by the commissariat, their salaries, after various deductions for clothing etc., were just enough for subsistence.⁹ This is clear if we compute the cost of a soldier's basic necessities from table 8. However the Indian officers' salaries, as evident from tables 9 and 10, were large enough to allow savings.

⁷ Clive Dewey, 'Some Consequences of Military Expenditure in British India: The Case of Upper Sind Sagar Doab, 1849-1947', in Dewey (ed), *Arrested Development in India: The Historical Dimension* (Delhi, 1988), pp.93-169; David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London, 1994), pp.59-61, 67; Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (New Delhi, 1990) pp. 43-44.

⁸ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 298, 309-12.

⁹ Mayhew, Adjutant General, to the Secy. of Government of India, Calcutta, Memorandum from Major General A. Becher, Quarter Master General, to the Adjutant General, Calcutta, Progs. nos. 111, 338, 6 Aug. 1861, 31 Aug. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861, Colonel E. Green, Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the Govt. of Bombay, Military Department, Poona, Progs. no. 114, 30 Nov. 1859, M.D.P. March 1860.

Table 8: Prices of Necessary Commodities

Date	Region	Cost of Essential Goods	Remarks
1860	West India	1 Maund of Salt = Rs 1 1 Seer 12 Chattak of Ghee = Rs 1 7 Seer of Pulse = Rs 1 15 Seer of Rice = Rs 1 17 Seer of Wheat = Rs 1	1 Maund = 40 Seer 1 Seer = 2 lb = 16 Chattaks
1890s	India	15 seer of Rice = Rs 1 17 seer of Wheat = Rs 1	A Soldier ate 30 Seer of Wheat or Rice, 3 Seer of Pulse, 30 Chattaks of Ghee and 10 Chattaks of Salt every month.
1900s	India	10 Seer of Rice = Rs 1 13 Seer of Wheat = Rs 1	

Sources: Michael McAlpin, 'Price Movements and Fluctuations in Economic Activity (1860-1947)' in D. Kumar (ed), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, 1757-c.1970*, vol. 2 (1982, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), pp.881-82; Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry: Its Organisation and Discipline, 1796-1852* (Calcutta, 1962), p.309; W.J. Wilson, *History of the Madras Army*, vol. 1 (Madras, 1882), pp.113-14, vol. 3 (Madras, 1883), p.93; Price in Ajmer, Dec. 1860, Signed Captain A.G. Davidson, Assistant Commissioner, Ajmer, Progs. no.315, 1 Dec. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861, N.A.I.

Table 9: Pay of Regular Infantry

Rank	Amount Per Month			Remarks
	1860s	1870s	1912	
Subadar Major		Rs 125		
Subadar				
- 1 st Class	Rs 70	Rs 100		
- 2 nd Class	Rs 52			
- 3 rd Class	Rs 42			
Jemadar	Rs 28 Anna 8	Rs 30		
Regimental Havildar	Rs 24			
Naik	Rs 12			
Private	Rs 7		Rs 13	In 1860, at Pegu a labourer earned Rs 9 per month (but his job was irregular).

Sources: Colonel L.W. Shakespear, *History of the 2nd King Edwardes Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)*, vol. 1 (Aldershot, 1912), p.29; *Army committee*, vol. 3, p. 651; Colonel G. Balfour, Chief of Military Finance Department, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Calcutta, Progs. no. 330, 17 Aug. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861; Minute on the organization of the army of India, Chap. 2, Pay, para 18, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

Table 10: Pay of the Irregular Cavalry

Rank	Amount Per Month		Remarks
	1860s	1890s	
Risaldar	Rs 150		In real terms the sowars were not paid more than the infantry privates because the former had to contribute for buying their horses. Further, the sowar had to spend Rs 3 Anna 8 per month to maintain a grass cutter who cut grass for the horses. Each horse needed 14 seer of grass daily. Grass was also available in the market at the cost 5 seer for Anna 1.
Resaidar	Rs 80		
Naib Resaidar	Rs 50		
Jemadar	Rs 50		
Dufadar	Rs 30-35		
Naib Dufadar	Rs 28		
Nishanburdar	Rs 24		
Trumpeter	Rs 24-30		
Sowar	Rs 25	Rs 31	

Sources: Lieutenant General W.H. Goodenough and Lieutenant Colonel J.C. Dalton, *The Army Book of the British Empire* (London, 1893), p.468; *Supplementary report*, Appendix A, p.18; Colonel J. Brind, commanding Artillery Division, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Bengal Artillery, Meerut, Lieutenant Colonel C.H. Blunt, commanding 4th Troop, 3rd Brigade Horse Artillery, to Major Bishop, Adjutant General 3rd Brigade, Ambala, Progs. no. 227, 10 April 1861, 23 April 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861; Lieutenant Colonel C.G. Becher, commanding 1st Regiment Beatson's Horse to Captain J.H. Champion, Assistant Adjutant General, Military Department, Camp Kotah, Progs. no.143, 2 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. March 1860, N.A.I.

However, the British officers from 1857 till 1913 were apprehensive that the soldiers' wages were inadequate. They argued that the pay should be increased, because prices and civilian wages were rising. Moreover, they were worried that if the pay were not raised, then the 'martial' groups would prefer the police instead of the army.¹⁰

To tide over the price fluctuations of foodgrains, the army paid extra money, known as *batta*, to the soldiers. In the first half of the 19th century, *batta* was paid to the soldiers for service in 'foreign' areas like Punjab and Sind. But when the Company annexed these two regions, *batta* for the units deployed there was abolished, despite the high price of foodgrains there. This angered the soldiers and was one of the factors in the upheaval in 1857.¹¹ Bartle Frere, the Commissioner of Sind, argued that abolition of *batta* was a mistake as a private could serve in the Ganga valley for Rs 7 per month, but it was impossible for him to serve in Sind even for Rs 10 per month. Sir George Clerk, a civilian official argued against this, saying that *batta* should not be paid for service in northwest India as foodgrains costs in that region had declined.¹² However Frere carried the day, probably because the British were nervous after the Great Mutiny, and after 1857 *batta* was paid for service inside as well as outside India.¹³

¹⁰ *Supplementary report*, pp.4, 16, 19; *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 158.

¹¹ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, pp.299, 301.

¹² *Supplementary report*, p.57; *Peel committee*, p.45.

¹³ Charles Wood to the Governor General, no.58, 14 Jan. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State, N.A.I.

To prevent the possibility of any mutiny when soldiers who were not needed were discharged, the army sweetened the pill by offering them gratuities: the greater the length of service for the Raj, the bigger the reward offered. When the 13th Punjab Infantry's personnel were invalided at Meerut in 1861, those with 20 years of service got pensions as well as gratuity which amounted to 9 months' pay, and those with less than 20 years of service were awarded pensions plus gratuity equivalent to 6 months' pay.¹⁴

There was no retirement age for the soldiers in the pre British Indian armies. Nor was there any provision for old age or disability pensions. In 1760s, the French Army introduced pensions. The British introduced such European techniques in the subcontinent. From 1796 onwards in the Indian Army, there were two types of pension- life and family pensions. For those personnel who were discharged due to physical infirmities, or who had taken voluntary retirement or whose terms of service were over, the army paid money every month till their death, keeping in view their past service. In the 1860s, privates with 20 years of service got pensions of Rs 3.5 per month, while those with 40 years of service got Rs 7 per month.¹⁵ For signal service against the mutineers of 1857, Mowla Buksh of

¹⁴ Roll of the men of 13th Punjab Infantry who appeared before the invaliding committee at Meerut, 20 May 1861, Lieutenant T.H. Scott Commanding late 13th Punjab Infantry to the Assistant Adjutant General. Calcutta, Progs. nos. 104, 187, 10 July 1861, 15 July 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

¹⁵ Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: an Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (1974, Reprint, DehraDun, 1988), pp. 201-2; Colin Jones, 'The Military Revolution and the Professionalisation of the French Army under the *Ancien Regime*', in Clifford J. Rogers (ed), *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, (Boulder, 1995), p. 164; K.S. Lal, 'The Striking power of the Army of the Sultanate', *Journal of Indian History*, vol. LV, (1977), p.106; *Supplementary report*, p.37; Roll of men of Nagpur Force transferred to the pension establishment, Progs. no. 388, 28 Aug. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

the irregular cavalry, after serving for 36 years and 2 months, got the pension to which he would have been entitled only after 40 years of service.¹⁶ This scheme of providing extra money was designed to activate loyalty among the troops for combat against possible rebels. Soldiers who showed extraordinary bravery in campaigns also acquired higher pensions. Naib Resaldar H.M. Khan of the Poona Horse retired in 1861 after serving for 43 years. He was eligible for a pension of Rs 20 per month. But due to his excellent performance in the assault on Asirgarh in 1818, he was granted an extraordinary pension of Rs 50 per month.¹⁷

In the pre colonial Hindu armies, family pension was available only for the officers. When they died, their relatives were given villages by the king. The British converted this welfare measure into cash and extended it to the privates. The imperial aim was that the scheme of family pensions would attach not only the soldiers, but also their families to the service of colonialism. If the heirs were women or old men, the pensions were paid till their death. If dead soldiers had no surviving parents, then the pensions were paid to their sons

¹⁶ Lieutenant H. Collier Commanding Ramgarh Cavalry to the Adjutant General, Calcutta, Colonel H.W. Norman, Deputy Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Calcutta, Balfour, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Calcutta, Captain B.E. Bacon, Assistant Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department to the Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. nos. 24-26, 37, 28 June 1861, 30 July 1861, 17 Sept. 1861, 1 Oct. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

¹⁷ Capt. R.H. Westropp, commandant Poona Horse to the Assistant Adjutant General, Poona, Colonel W.F. Marriot, Acting Secy. to Bombay Govt. Military Department to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Report by Lieutenant Colonel J. Hannington, offg. Controller of Military Finance, Fort William, Progs. no. 421, 13 Sept. 1860, 22 Oct. 1860, 28 Dec. 1860, M.D.P. March 1861.

till they became adults, or to their daughters till their marriages.¹⁸ If soldiers died fighting gallantly, then an extraordinary lump sum, instead of a mere family pension, was granted. In 1860 the mother of one brave Resaldar Wachan Singh, received Rs 1000 after his death.¹⁹ Such payments were designed to generate aggressiveness among the soldiers during combat, as the troops were sure that, even if they died fighting, their loved ones would be cared for by the government.

The army hoped to activate the soldiers' combat ardour through the wound pension, which was introduced in 1852. This sort of pension was given to personnel who lost their limbs while fighting, or became so seriously wounded that they had to be discharged from the army. The magnitude of this pension depended on the nature of wounds. Privates with minor injuries received Rs 4 per month while those with serious wounds received Rs 5 per month.²⁰

To enhance group morale among the soldiers, and to make them more amenable to discipline, the Western professional armies provided uniforms to them. Uniforms for soldiers were a novelty in India. The Maratha Army had no uniforms. The Indian army

¹⁸ Ravindra Kumar Sharma, 'The Military System of the Mewar (Udaipur) State (Ca. 800 to 1947)', *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 30 (1986), p. 120; *Supplementary report*, p.136; Extract from the proceedings of the Govt. of India in the Foreign Department, Progs. no. 313, 20 Jan. 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

¹⁹ To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no.139, 3 April 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

²⁰ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p.145-6; Major H.K. Burne, offg. Deputy Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, to the Deputy Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. no. 262, 8 March 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

supplied uniforms annually, free of cost, to soldiers who went abroad. In 1859, each of the 5000 soldiers who went to China got 2 pairs of greatcoats.²¹ An allowance was provided to the soldiers, for maintaining their uniforms.²²

Before combat, the Rajputs used to take opium to reduce their nervousness. The British replaced opium with alcohol, because contemporary British medical opinion believed that alcohol cured many diseases. So during epidemics, liquor flowed freely. John Keegan writes that drink was an important palliative of nervous tension while waiting for action. Just before battle, it was a psychological necessity. Taking alcohol before battles was common in the European armies, and this trend the British introduced in India. When the Indian soldiers faced extra strain, as during campaigns or overseas deployments, they were provided with extra amounts of rum and malt liquor to keep their morale intact. Each soldier generally was supplied with 1 dram of rum per day; but during war and epidemics, the army provided each soldier with 2 drams per day. Sick soldiers were allowed to buy rum at a subsidized price from the army canteens. Alcohol was also the best antidote to the boredom inherent in the long garrison duties.²³

²¹ Tallett, *War and Society*, p. 120; S.N. Sen, *The Military System of the Marathas* (Calcutta, 1928, reprint, 1979), p.72; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no. 58, 14 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State; From the Secretary of State for India to the Military Department, Fort William, Progs. no. 215, 11 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

²² *Army Regulations, India*, vol. 2, *Regulations and Orders for the Army* (Calcutta, 1913), p.112.

²³ Tony Hayter, 'The Army and the First British Empire, 1714-1783', in David Chandler and Ian Beckett (eds), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (Oxford, 1994), p. 111; John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York, 1993, reprint, 1994), p. 249; John Keegan, *The Price of Admiralty: The Evolution of Naval Warfare* (1988, reprint, New York, 1989), p. 70; Saxena, *Army of the Rajputs*, p. 355; *Army Regulations*, p.115; Circular by Lieutenant Colonel E.B. Johnson, offg. Adjutant General, Adjutant

The army was apprehensive about the soldiers' health, because much of the war machine's strength depended on it. The British in India were obviously influenced by the European military establishments' assumption that supplying medical care for the sick raised morale, and encouraged men to fight. In 1870, hospital facilities were available for 5% of the colonial soldiers.²⁴ The Indian Army provided extra health care for treating battlefield wounds during campaigns. Each infantry regiment had 1 doctor during peacetime, but when it was on active service, it was awarded 1 surgeon, 1 assistant surgeon, 1 assistant apothecary and 1 dresser.²⁵

Some aspects of the Indian Army's reward structure were unique by European standards because the British absorbed some indigenous elements. Land-grants to the soldiers, which the British retained for the Indian Army, had no place in the professional European armies. This incentive was a continuation of the pre colonial military tradition of issuing hereditary land grants (jagirs) to the soldiers. Most of the soldiers came from small peasant families, and had a stake in the land.²⁶ The army encouraged them by dangling the

General's office, Simla, circular no. 3061, 25 June 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2, N.A.I.

²⁴ Tallett, *War and Society*, p. 111; Minute on the organization of the native army of India, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 36, 43, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

²⁵ Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Wilson, *Historical Records of the Fourth Prince of Wales Own Regiment Madras Light Cavalry* (Madras 1877), p.45; Colonel L.W. Shakespear, *History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)*, vol. 1, (Aldershot, 1912), p.3; Colonel H. Marshall, Acting Secy. to the Govt. of Madras, Military Department, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Fort Saint George, Progs. no. 41, 3 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

²⁶ Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Art of War in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 1984), pp.75-86; Omissi, *Sepoy*

prospect of jagirs in front of them. For exceptional performances, like raising soldiers for the Raj, saving the lives of British officers, suffering wounds in battles etc., the army awarded such personnel land. Aitah Mohammed Khan was a Resaldar in the Bunoo Police Cavalry. During 1857, he volunteered for service in Hindustan along with 112 of his tribesmen. They were in the Multan Horse and fought against the rebels in Delhi. After the rebellion, he and his followers were granted jagirs (each worth Rs 1000), in perpetuity.²⁷

When it was not possible to provide cooked food to soldiers during emergencies, the army provided, at controlled prices in the bazaars set up under military supervision, raw food grains which the men had to cook. Bazaars were an indigenous tradition which the British absorbed. When local supplies were not forthcoming, such markets were set up and they had at least 3 days supplies. The commanding officers maintained registers which contained the names of all the baniahs (Hindu businessmen) who were allowed to join the market. The baniahs had to pay a certain sum to the regiments for being allowed to do business. One baniah supplied either a company or half a squadron of cavalry. The baniahs occasionally supplied on credit. No mahajans (moneylenders) were allowed in the bazaars, because the army feared that the soldiers might get into debt. Indian officers were appointed as kotwals, who saw that baniahs supplied proper quantities of cereals to the soldiers.²⁸

and the Raj, p.50; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 66, 11 Oct.1875, Norman minutes.

²⁷ Captain J.B. Lind Commanding Pathan Cavalry, to Major R.C. Lawrence, Military Secy. to the Punjab Govt., Lahore, Progs. no.180, 13 July 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

²⁸ Sarkar, *Art of War*, p.191; *Army Regulations*, p.82; *Peel committee*, p.4.

The history of warfare shows, however, that soldiers were not willing to die just for tangible incentives. The missing link was symbolic rewards. Such tokens conferred honour and glory: the intangible factors that led men to war. The pre colonial armies had at their disposal robes of honour, daggers etc. which were awarded to exceptional warriors. But the British replaced these with rewards like medals imported from the West. Charles I in 1643 first introduced the silver medal for those men who had performed well under difficult circumstances. Individual loyalty and gallantry were honoured by supplying Distinguished Service Medals to the Indian soldiers after extraordinary performances.²⁹ For honouring regimental pride, the 2nd Gurkha Rifles, which participated in the successful Kabul-Kandahar march, was awarded bronze stars in February 1882.³⁰ Though such medals were of little intrinsic value, they had value within the armed forces: John Keegan rightly says that the cultural ethos of the military organizations was different from the civilian world.³¹

Orders and ranks were two awards which had some markers of status, along with the financial incentives associated with them. In 1837, Bentinck introduced the Order of Merit. The Indian Order of Merit was given for showing extraordinary bravery in combat. Those who bagged this award had their salaries and pensions increased, and were allowed

²⁹ Ian Roy, 'Towards the Standing Army, 1660-1702', in Chandler et. al., *History of the British Army*, p.44; Keegan, *History of Warfare*, p. 270 ; *Army Regulations*, pp.67, 70 ; Z.A. Desai and W.E. Begley (eds), *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan*, tr. by A.R. Fuller, (New Delhi 1990), pp. 91-92; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no.3, 8 Jan. 1861, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

³⁰ Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, p. 104.

³¹ Keegan, *History of Warfare*, p. XVI.

to put the letters IOM beside their names.³²

Ranks were a sort of carrot which, the British believed, encouraged the soldiers to risk their lives repeatedly. This was because higher ranks meant greater prestige, along with financial perquisites. So, for gallantry in combat, the troops were promoted. In 1860, a private named Ranjit Singh, was promoted to a Naik after being wounded in action.³³

II

Welfare Measures as a Disciplinary Mechanism.

Incentives were tools of domination as they were supplied to the soldiers with the aim of encouraging proper behaviour. When the soldiers misbehaved, welfare measures were denied to them. The commanding officers had the discretionary power to give non-military jobs to soldiers, either during their service tenure, or after their retirement. For such jobs, soldiers required recommendations and good character certificates from their officers. This became a technique for extracting obedience from soldiers as such jobs involved less strenuous duties and the troops continued to draw military salaries or pensions along with the wages of the extra-military jobs. One Havildar of the 48th Madras Infantry, Munniapah, being in the good books of his commanding officer, became a Sub-Overseer in the P.W.D.

³² Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 146; Wilson, *Madras Cavalry*, p.66; *Army Regulations*, pp.69-70; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no. 50, 24 Jan. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

³³ To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no. 77, 24 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

in Moulmein in 1861. If the soldiers on deputation misbehaved, they were removed from the civil departments.³⁴

Good Conduct Pay was another scheme introduced in 1837 for disciplining the soldiers. Those who served obediently received extra pay. The army's plan was to encourage long-term loyalty. The longer the soldiers remained loyal, the greater was their Good Conduct Pay. After 6 years of service it became Rs 1 per month and for 10 years of service, it increased to Rs 2 per month. However, the commanding officers could deny this extra pay on grounds of misconduct. There was disagreement in the army over this scheme: some officers wanted to link discipline with combat effectiveness. They argued that the higher pay should depend, not merely on the proper conduct and length of service, but also on the tactical efficiency of the troops.³⁵

The breakdown of discipline in 1857 forced the army to strengthen the link between obedient behaviour and wages. The Punjab School argued that ambition and satisfaction could be induced among the soldiers by a graduated scale of pay for each rank. The authorities hoped that this would satisfy the loyal veterans, and would discourage rebelliousness among the junior troops, as they were bound to gain economically by

³⁴ *Army Regulations*, pp.89, 267; Extract from the proceedings of the Governor General of India in the Military Department, Progs. nos. 412, 614, 18 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Memo by Colonel E. Haythorne, Adjutant General, Adjutant General's office, Ambala, circular no. 63/N, 27 March 1865, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 5.

³⁵ Omissi, *Sepoy and the Raj*, p.67; *Army committee*, vol.1-A, *Minority report*, p.159; Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts and native infantry regiments, by Haythorne, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no. 97/N, 17 Aug. 1864, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 4, Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 26, 30, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

remaining loyal in the long run. This scheme was geared to encourage loyalty among the younger soldiers, as the life pension scheme had attractions only for the old soldiers who were going to retire (and most of the rebels of 1857 had been newly enlisted recruits). Under this scheme the privates got Rs 6 per month for the 1st year of service, Rs 7 per month from the 2nd year of their service, and Rs 8 per month after 15 years of service. Finally, after 20 years of service, they received Rs 8.8 per month. Graduated scales of pay existed for the Indian officers also, but they were based not only on seniority, but also on merit as assessed by the British officers.³⁶ The power of assessing the capabilities of the Indian officers, enabled the British officers to control them.

A group within the army wanted to increase the life pension of the Indian officers and the privates. This group argued that the Indian officers, with their high social position and the influence they enjoyed in their local communities, should not be alienated. Colonel L.C. Dunsterville, Commandant of the 20th Punjab Regiment in 1912, warned that the low rate of the privates' pension was a source of discontent among the Sikhs. Major General F.J. Aylmer argued that the army introduced the life pension with the aim of extracting long-term good behaviour from the soldiers. The underlying assumption was that the troops, in the hope of getting a pension after retirement, remained obedient (as 'misbehaviour' would result in discharges). But as the pension had remained the same for the last hundred years, it should be raised. W. Meyer, a civilian official, challenged this line of thinking. Meyer argued that it was improper to pamper the soldiers, who were mercenaries. Moreover, he continued, in the civil departments, one received a pension after 30 years of service while

³⁶ *Supplementary report*, pp.18, 36, 55; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 5, Pension system, para 2, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

conditions in the army were improving. Before 1857, soldiers received a pension after 40 years of service. In 1878, they received pension after 32 years of service. And now they were receiving it after 25 years of service. Aylmer argued against this that the soldiers' job was more arduous than that of the civilians were and there was no other option than to keep the mercenaries contented.³⁷ However, in the end, due to the army's penny-pinching policy, the pension was not raised despite the threat to discipline.

Frequently in history, the breakdown of supplies has resulted in the disintegration of military forces. Lack of food resulted in a decline of morale, which resulted in desertions, and the weakening of discipline, which culminated in pillage and plunder, thus resulting in peasant violence against the troops. The best example of this was the dissolution of the French Army in Spain against counter-insurgency warfare during 1808. The Maratha Army did not accept the burden of feeding the soldiers directly during wartime. Contractors were assigned pieces of land temporarily. From its revenues they were supposed to supply the army. However this system was clumsy. The Marathas also depended on the banjaras (grain merchants) who not only charged exorbitant prices, but also vanished during campaigns and occasionally sold grain to the enemy forces. As a result the Maratha field armies disintegrated during protracted campaigns. In India the princely armies commandeered supplies, which in turn alienated the peasants. By contrast, Arthur Wellington paid for all his supplies during his campaign against Mysore and the Marathas. This made the peasants pro-British and they brought all the provisions to the Company's force. Moreover the peasants supplied the British with information about the enemy's movements. A contented peasantry made the British rear secure, and an effective supply

³⁷ *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 158, vol. 3, pp.651-52, 904.

system possible. The Company's sepoys fought badly against the Sikhs at Ferozeshah on December 1845 because they were without provisions. But when well-fed before the fight at Aliwal on January 1846, they performed admirably. The British learnt the lesson from this. To prevent losses among the men and animals in the army due to malnutrition, and to raise the fighting spirit of the troops, the military establishment was concerned to ensure the supply of food for the soldiers, and forage for their horses. During famines, or when the army functioned as an Imperial Fire Brigade, local supplies either became too costly or were just not available. The commissariat then came to the soldiers' assistance. Rations were supplied when the troops were deployed in China, as the provisions could not be procured there.³⁸ If local food supplies were available but were costly, then the army paid its personnel extra. Each soldier, according to the army's calculations, spent Rs 3 Anna 8 per month on his diet. But in 1860, when the prices of foodgrains increased, the authorities calculated that each soldier had to spend more than the stipulated amount. The army provided the extra money, as dearness allowance for the diet.³⁹ This kept the British-Indian soldiers well-disciplined and tactically effective. During emergencies, when local food

³⁸ Richard Holmes, 'Battle: The Experience of Modern Combat', in Charles Townshend (ed), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern War* (Oxford, 1997), p. 205; A.G. Macdonell, *Napoleon and his Marshalls* (1934, reprint, London, 1996), pp. 131, 149; Jac Weller, *Wellington in India* (London, 1972), pp. 33-248; M.R. Katak, *The First Anglo-Maratha War, 1774-83: A Military Study of Major Battles* (Bombay, 1993), pp. 228-31; Hugh Cook, *The Sikh Wars: The British Army in Punjab, 1845-1849* (New Delhi, 1975), pp. 69, 82; Colonel W.B. Thomson, Commissary General, to the Secy. of the Govt. of India, Military Department, Fort William, Progs. no. 208; 25 Feb. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no. 50, 10 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

³⁹ Norman, to Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department Calcutta, Progs. no. 36, 6 July 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

supplies collapsed, the more disciplined Indian regiments got preferential treatment from the commissariat, in order to encourage obedience among the other units. In 1861, when due to famine in Rajasthan, the units stationed there failed to acquire local supplies at normal rates, the commissariat issued a special allowance first to the Mharwara Battalion as it had remained loyal during 1857.⁴⁰

In general, the soldiers were provided some money known as a hutting allowance, for constructing their lines when they were shifted from one place to another. But gradually the army constructed barracks (lines) for the soldiers.⁴¹ Their Home Army in Britain, which started building barracks from the 17th century, probably influenced the British in India. The argument was that billeting the soldiers in the civilians' houses harmed group cohesion as the regiments had to be broken into small groups. This also made it difficult for the authorities to monitor the soldiers. The European armies believed that an essential military conditioning factor was the barrack, which separated the soldiers from the civilian world. The colonial army provided housing facilities to the soldiers because the military elites believed that, if they were lodged with the civilians, then the troops' discipline would collapse. The army felt that if the troops were exposed to the 'seditious' influence of the civilians' then their loyalty would undergo a severe strain. So the soldiers' lines were

⁴⁰ Colonel G.S.T. Lawrence, Agent for the Rajputana States, to the Undersecretary, to the India Govt., Foreign Department, Progs. no. 315, 29 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁴¹ Hannynghton, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Becher, to the Secy. of the Govt. of India, Military Department, Calcutta, Major F.D. Atkinson, to the offg. Controller of Military Finance, Fort William, Progs. nos. 390, 720, 722, 25 Jan. 1861, 21 March 1861, 28 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

constructed and repaired at the state's expense.⁴² Again, to set an example, loyal and disciplined units were always allowed the first claim on hutting money.⁴³

From its retired personnel, the army created a landed gentry to police the countryside. In the British conceptual framework, the landed gentry was respected in India. It was the imperial belief that land grants increased the prestige of the ex-soldiers, and indirectly that of the army, in the rural society. The army provided land either to the individual soldiers, or created military colonies. Such measures also benefited the soldiers' families and encouraged them either to remain loyal or serve in the army. Subadar Major Sangbir Thapa of the 2nd Gurkhas got a piece of land in 1868 for his loyal service throughout his long tenure.⁴⁴ For old soldiers, the army set up colonies separated from the society. The military colonies were the continuation of the Invalid Thanahs, which the Bengal Army established in the early 19th century. It was easier for the army to keep watch over the retired soldiers concentrated in the colonies than if they were scattered throughout the countryside. Their sons grew up in such colonies and were potential reservoirs of recruits. The government took 3000 acres of land from the zamindars in Dehradun for a military colony to settle the Gurkhas who had aided the British in reconquering Delhi from

⁴² Tallett, *War and Society*, pp. 141-2; John Childs, 'The Restoration Army, 1660-1702', in Chandler et. al., *History of the British Army*, p. 62; *Army Regulations*, p.81; Memorandum by Norman on the distribution of the native armies of India, para 10, 26 Sept. 1872, Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, Localization of regiments, para 11, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

⁴³ Hannington, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. no. 392, 25 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁴⁴ Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, p.99.

the rebels in 1857. The retired Gurkhas cultivated the land and paid the lowest possible tax.⁴⁵ For the imperialists', soldiers were more vital than the Raj's local collaborators-the zamindars. While constructing the colonies, the army deliberately encouraged zamindar-soldier rivalry to prevent any bonhomie between the 'natural leaders' of the Indian society and the Raj's sword arm. The army wanted the retired soldiers to check the zamindars' power.

For retaining the orders and the medals, the soldiers had to behave well, as they were liable to lose these privileges for misconduct, or if they had to appear before the courts martial.⁴⁶ Besides gallantry, good behaviour on part of the soldiers was also necessary for promotions. One Mohammed Afzul, a trooper of the 1st Punjab Cavalry, on 23 October 1857 attacked the rebels in Kanauj. But due to his previous record of bad conduct, he was not promoted to a non-commissioned officer. However, Ranjit Singh, a private who was wounded in action was promoted to a Naik, as his previous service record was satisfactory.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (New Delhi, 1995), pp.95-139; Extract from the proceedings of the Governor General in the Home Department, camp Kylwara, Atkinson, to the Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. nos. 618-19, 4 Jan. 1861, 15 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁴⁶ *Army Regulations*, pp.68-70.

⁴⁷ Anon, *History of the 1st Punjab Cavalry* (Lahore, 1887), p.40; To the officers commanding divisions, districts and brigades, circular by Johnson, Adjutant General's office, Lucknow, circular no. 568, 27 Jan. 1863, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 3; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no.77, 24 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

The British strategy was to co-opt Indian officers by offering them greater quantities of tangible and non-tangible rewards, so as to separate them from the privates, in order to cause divisions of interest among the Indian soldiers. The imperial hope was that the privileged group- the officers- would crave extra rewards for themselves. So self-interest would dominate over the collective interest. Hence a struggle for power, prestige and privilege would emerge among the Indian soldiers and they could not operate as a monolith against the British officer corps.

Indian officers got more facilities than the privates. In return, they were responsible for the behaviour of their troops. The excuse that they had no knowledge about the privates was no more accepted after 1857. Resaldar Majors and Subedar Majors became the confidential advisors of the British commandants about the state of the Indian privates, and aided the British officers in disciplining the troops.⁴⁸

During 1857, the Bengal Army rebelled and the Punjab Irregular Cavalry aided in its suppression. So the British increased the latter's pay after 1859. The British assumption was that the influence of the Indian officers over the privates was directly proportional to the former's seniority. So the higher the rank, the greater was the quantum of increase in the pay packet. While Resaldars' salaries were doubled, the Dufadar and Kote Dufadars' salaries increased by Rs 10 and Rs 7 respectively, and the sowars' pay was raised only by Rs 5.⁴⁹ In the barracks there were special quarters for the Indian officers, for extra comfort

⁴⁸ *Army Regulations*, p.104; *Supplementary report*, p.37.

⁴⁹ *Supplementary report*, pp.16-18.

and privacy for them.⁵⁰ The higher the rank, the greater was the hutting allowance. In the 1860s, a Subadar got Rs 30, a Jemadar Rs 15, a Havildar Rs 10 and a private only Rs 3.⁵¹ The Orders of British India were granted only to the Indian officers for long, honourable and faithful service. Those who got these awards received the honorary titles of 'Sirdar Bahadur' and 'Bahadur' and after retirement got the honorary rank of Lieutenant or Captain. In addition to their salaries or pensions they got Rs 30-60 per month. Every year, about 100 officers were given such awards.⁵² Though the Indian Order of Merit was given to both the Indian officers and the privates, the lion's share went to the commissioned ranks. In the history of the 1st Punjab Cavalry about 23 persons got this order, 16 of whom were officers.⁵³ We may take this unit as representative of the Indian cavalry regiments.

III

Welfare Measures, Military Effectiveness and Financial Interests of the Army

Some welfare measures aided the military and financial interests of the army, while other measures harmed the security and monetary dimensions of the colonial war machine. Non-military jobs awarded to soldiers were financially helpful to the state, because this technique

⁵⁰ Note on the garrison and fortress of Agra, Native troops, Calcutta, 31 Dec. 1873, Norman minutes.

⁵¹ Hannington, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. no. 392, 25 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁵² Wilson, *Madras Cavalry*, p.66.

⁵³ *1st Punjab Cavalry*, Appendix II-III, pp. IV-V.

enabled the army head quarter, to honour loyal and brave officers for whom vacancies did not exist in the army. It was also cheaper for the government to man the P.W.D. with Indian officers. In addition, the Indian officers were more efficient as, unlike the European Sergeants, they did not get drunk.⁵⁴

The gratuity scheme raised the army's budget as it had to pay a huge sum to the soldiers all of a sudden. But at the same time, this measure raised the army's combat potential. Gratuities enabled the army to get rid of aged personnel, who were militarily less effective compared with the young robust personnel capable of arduous campaigning. There were many units which possessed soldiers with more than 2 decades of service. One such unit was the Nagpur Irregular Force. To get rid of 143 aged men, the army had to spend Rs 22,195. Those privates with 26 years of service were given Rs 160 each.⁵⁵ Those soldiers who were unfit for soldiering but had not yet reached the age (20 years of service) necessary for getting pensions were encouraged to take discharge by offering them gratuities. For them, in 1870, the army introduced a policy under which soldiers willing to take discharge after 5 or 10 years of service got gratuities amounting to salaries of 3

⁵⁴ Extract from the proceedings of the President of the Council of India, Fort William, 26 Nov. 1860; From the Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. no. 614, 3 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861, Circular to officers commanding divisions and districts, service soldiers, memos, by Haythorne, Adjutant General's office, Ambala, circular nos. 62/N, 63/N, 27 March 1865, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 5.

⁵⁵ Roll of men of the Nagpur Force transferred to the pension establishment, Progs. no. 388, 28 Aug. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

months and 6 months respectively.⁵⁶ This scheme was geared to create an army of young men, probably in response to the growing Russian threat on the northwest frontier.

Wound pensions for the irregular cavalry horses involved an obligation on the part of the army to replace the dead horses. This expenditure was aimed to raise the combat effectiveness of the irregular troopers. Such troopers were responsible for buying their own horses. When they lost their horses in action, all the troopers, by making collective contributions known as the chunda funds, bought new horses. But when they were engaged in heavy fighting and lost many horses, then the chunda funds were unable to replace all the horses. In the long run this encouraged a tendency among the troopers to shy away from combat, so as to avoid casualties to their horses. So the army intervened and paid monetary compensations to encourage the troopers to fight. When the 4th Sikh Cavalry lost many horses in action against the mutineers of 1857, the army paid each trooper Rs 150.⁵⁷ This measure was a vast improvement on the custom prevalent in the princely militaries, in which the troopers were responsible for their horses. If their mounts died, then the troopers were discharged. This explains the reluctance of the cavalry of the indigenous powers to clash with the Raj's mounted force.⁵⁸

In the 19th century, the evolution of the colonial army's uniforms reflected a trend

⁵⁶ Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 4, Pension system, para 8, 28, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

⁵⁷ *Supplementary report*, p.19; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no.77, 24 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State; Scinde Horse, Brigadier Park's Report, camp Bairseah, Progs. no. 143, 11 Oct. 1859, M.D.P. March 1860.

⁵⁸ Irvine, *Army of the Indian Moghuls*, pp. 298-99.

towards greater comfort. Occasionally, comfortable uniforms cost the army more, but at the same time they raised the soldier's combat effectiveness. The dress of the Peshawar and the Hazara Mountain Levies was troublesome as their tight trousers were unsuitable for climbing the hills, and the sleeves of the jackets had to be cut near the armpits while loading and unloading the pack animals. So this uniform was replaced by a Khaki blouse and loose trousers which were better adapted to combat in the hills. These uniforms required more cloth. So, for each uniform, the army had to spend Anna 8 more.⁵⁹

The army spent money in making arrangements for supplying food to the units deployed overseas. This was necessary because the units stationed abroad suffered an extraordinary rate of sickness. This was due to the failure of the soldiers to cook their own food properly. The soldiers generally cooked their food in *chulas* (earthen or stone ovens) fired with twigs. This was both fatiguing and time consuming. The army's initial expenditure in making arrangements to feed the soldiers reduced the long-term financial loss, which the military force faced due to the pensions and the gratuities which it had to pay to the soldiers demobilized due to sickness. Moreover, the reduction of the frontline strength reduced the overseas units' combat edge. So the army evolved a long administrative tail for providing food and water to the soldiers who were deployed outside India. Each infantry regiment stationed abroad had 10 coolies, 20 water carriers, 10 sweepers and 1 cook.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ R.H. Davies, Secy. of Punjab Govt. Military Department, to the Secy. of Govt. of India, Progs. no. 285, 17 Dec. 1860, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁶⁰ Major G. Casserly, *Life in an Indian Outpost* (London, n.d.), p.23; Abstract return of the 19th Punjab Infantry Regiment, signed Capt. J. Doran, Commandant, Barackpore, Progs. no. 136, 1 Dec. 1859, M.D.P.

Mark Harrison writes that health care for the soldiers raised the army's cohesion, which in turn raised its military efficiency. The British probably understood this. Betterment of living conditions resulted in much expenditure on the army. The army believed that, by keeping the soldiers healthy, the combat potential of the force was raised. The army was convinced that the ordinary populace was disease-prone. If any epidemic broke out among the civilians (who were considered more vulnerable to such diseases), the soldiers would catch such ailments if lodged with them. So the soldiers were segregated from the civilians by accommodating the former in lines.⁶¹ In the second half of the 19th century, the hutting allowance for each regiment cost the army Rs 3,116.⁶² The British believed that accumulated dirt gave rise to health problems. The only way to check it was by building new lines. Any lines which were more than 40 years old were demolished and new lines were constructed for better hygiene. Again, when diseases like small pox spread, the British medical opinion advised the army to demolish the old lines and construct new ones in their

March 1860, Commissariat department, office of the Controller of Military Finance, signed Lieutenant Colonel T. McGown, Controller of Military Finance, Fort Saint George, Progs. no. 329, 7 May 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

⁶¹ M. Harrison, 'Medicine and the Management of Modern Warfare', *History of Science*, 30, 106 (1996), pp. 379-410; Proceedings of a committee assembled at Allahabad by the order of Brigadier Fordyce to report upon the cantonment of Allahabad, Progs. no. 14, 10 July 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860; Circular by Johnson, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no. 1125, 15 April 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2.

⁶² Hannington, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Memorandum from Capt. H. Hyde, Undersecretary to the Govt. of India, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. nos. 392-93, 25 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

place.⁶³ When the line of 36th Infantry Regiment became unhealthy after rainfall, the army immediately reconstructed them. In order to check the spread of cholera, the army ordered that there should not be any stagnant pool of water in front of the soldiers' lines. The army did re-roofing and re-thatching of the lines. Beams, doors and windows were also supplied to the soldiers. Strict instructions were given for making the barracks spacious.⁶⁴ The army provided recreational facilities to the soldiers in barracks. Each unit was encouraged to build aesthetic gardens, which provided an atmosphere necessary for a healthy mind. Fresh air, fruits and vegetables, necessary for good health, were available from the gardens. The authorities provided seeds, tools, land and gardeners freely. The 6th Poona division got Rs 400 per year for maintaining such gardens.⁶⁵

There was a direct linkage between sickness and the frontline strength. The Marathas considered hospital arrangements unnecessary. Hence epidemics frequently decimated their forces. During the Second Afghan War (1878-80), the 1st Gurkha Rifles

⁶³ *Army Regulations*, p.81; Lieutenant Colonel C. Davidson, Resident at Hyderabad, to Major General R.J.H. Birch, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Governor General's camp, Mirzapore, Progs. nos. 158, 368, 1 and 14 Feb. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts, brigades, stations and cantonments, circular no. 32/E, 22 Feb. 1865, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 5.

⁶⁴ Note on the garrison and fortress of Agra, Calcutta, 31 Dec. 1873, Norman minutes; Proceedings of a committee assembled by the order of Lieutenant Colonel Pelly commanding at Aurangabad to report upon the lines of the Hyderabad Cavalry, Proceedings of a committee assembled by order of the officer commanding at Aurangabad to examine and report on the infantry lines of the Hyderabad Contingent, Major B.R. Powell, President of committee on lines at Aurangabad to the staff officer at Aurangabad, Progs. no. 371, 5 Dec. and 6 Dec. 1860, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁶⁵ *Army Regulations*, pp.83-84.

suffered more casualties from disease than from the Afghan enemy. So, for pragmatic reasons, the Indian Army always enquired in detail about how many soldiers were ill at one time, and the type of disease(s) they had contracted. The army utilized technology to check the spread of epidemics. The senior military officers used the telegraph for quick exchange of information, to know where epidemics like cholera had broken out, and to implement counter-measures to suppress the disease.⁶⁶ The effectiveness of the army depended not only how quickly it could suppress the spread of diseases, but also on the speed of processing the sick and wounded soldiers and transferring them back to the battle zones. So money was no obstacle when it came to improving the hospital facilities. The *kuccha* hospitals were thatched, and hence vulnerable to fire. Moreover, moisture destroyed the walls. So these hospitals were reconstructed with concrete. The hospital at Aurangabad was situated near the market, from where continuous noise disturbed the patients. Due to faulty construction, neither air nor light entered the hospital. But free circulation of air was necessary for the patients' health, and to reduce the danger of fire. The accommodation facilities were also inadequate. So a new spacious building, 6000 sq. feet in area, was constructed at a new site where there were trees (for giving shade to the sick and for cooking meals).⁶⁷ Hospitals with low roofs were remade. Under the new plans, some

⁶⁶ Sen, *Maratha Army*, p. 134; John Gaylor, *Sons of John Company: The Indian and Pakistan Armies, 1903-1991* (1992, reprint, New Delhi, 1993), pp. 59, 326. Circular by Johnson, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no. 1125, 15 April 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2.

⁶⁷ Proceedings of a committee assembled at Aurangabad under instruction received from the Quarter Master General for the purpose of fixing the site of the lines of Aurangabad station, Progs. no. 370, 24 Dec. 1860, M.D.P. March 1861.

cavalry hospitals had tiled rooms.⁶⁸ Bad sanitation claimed many soldiers' lives. So the army supplied bedding and blankets in the hospitals. In the cold, damp regions, socks and flannels were also issued to the soldiers. And the authorities regularly enquired about the sanitary state and conditions of the latrines, and took steps to improve them. The hospitals had improved in the post Mutiny era because the pre 1857 hospitals lacked a water supply and proper drainage.⁶⁹

In case the army was unable to provide health care, it financially compensated those who had suffered. The army hoped that this would strengthen the conviction among the soldiers that the military bureaucracy cared for them, a conviction which in turn would tighten their bonds of loyalty to the army. The army supplied a doctor when a regiment marched from one place to another place. A soldier, Bani Ram, became blind due to ophthalmia. He contracted it in 1860, when his regiment was marching from Gonah towards Jhansi, and there was no doctor in his unit. The commandant was ordered to explain why no doctor was accompanying the unit as per the rules. The soldier had to be demobilized, but since he had served for only 2 years, he was ineligible for pension. As a special case, on humanitarian ground, he was paid Rs 66.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Note on the station of Morar and fortress of Gwalior, Accommodation for the troops, Calcutta, 19 Jan. 1874, Norman minutes.

⁶⁹ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 172; *Army Regulations*, p.83; Memorandum on possible military operations beyond our trans Indus frontier, para 8, Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 36, 43, 45, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

⁷⁰ Major S. Becher, Deputy Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Bacon, to the offg. Deputy Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. nos. 200, 202, 17 Oct. 1860, 9 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

There were some welfare measures which harmed the combat potential and were financially expensive for the army. The life pension scheme involved a long-term expenditure for the army, as it had to pay for retired personnel till their deaths. Despite this, this scheme failed to integrate the soldiers totally with the war machine and reduced the army's combat power. This was because life pension attracted the old soldiers and not the newly enlisted personnel, as the soldiers became eligible for life pensions after a minimum of 20 years of service. The pension rules were framed to reward the old men, who were encouraged to stay in the ranks, though it harmed the efficiency of the force.⁷¹

The army followed several programmes which aimed to create the picture of a benevolent Sarkar among the soldiers but raised the army's expenditure. The army gave pensions to the militarily useless troops even though they were technically not eligible for such rewards. Those soldiers who became physically unfit for military duties after 14 years of service were deliberately retained for another year, even though they were useless from the combat perspective, so that they became eligible for life pensions.⁷²

The pre British Indian militaries followed the notorious practice of going into campaigns with the soldiers' families. This not only reduced such forces' mobility but also created enormous logistical problems. One of the primary reasons for the destruction of the

⁷¹ *Supplementary report*, pp.35-36, 55; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 5, Pension system, para 2, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes; Roll of the 13th Punjab Infantry who appeared before the invaliding committee, Meerut, Progs. no. 103, 20 May 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

⁷² Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 4, Pension system, para 9, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

Maratha Army in the Third Battle of Panipat was because it was followed by an enormous host of non-combatants. The British abolished this practice. Nevertheless, the Indian Army sought to keep the soldiers' spirits high by allowing them furlough (paid leave) to visit their villages. Furlough was introduced in 1796. This measure was necessary as most of the soldiers were married. Except in the Madras Army, (where the wives stayed with the regiments within the regimental lines but were not allowed to follow the units in campaigns), only 15% of the troops were allowed to bring their wives to the cantonments. The rest of the soldiers' wives remained in the villages. To further motivate the soldiers to perform well in battles, those regiments which participated in operations and suffered combat losses were awarded extra furlough. Again, for encouraging overseas service, those units which volunteered for duties abroad, were allowed a furlough of 3.5 months before and after the deployments. The soldiers were generally allowed 3.5 months paid leave each year. If, they contracted illness in the meantime, then the army, to project a benevolent image, extended the furlough period by another 2 to 4 months on humanitarian grounds.⁷³

The army had to pay salaries to the soldiers even when they were on leave. This welfare measure compromised the army's fighting potential. Due to furlough, the corps were 15% weaker between April to November. Units stationed in strategically vulnerable areas like the northwest frontier, where the living conditions were exceptionally harsh, got extra furlough. So such units were always 34% below strength. As the war clouds gathered

⁷³ P.L. Mehra, 'The Panipat Campaign', in Hari Ram Gupta (ed), *Marathas and Panipat* (Chandigarh, 1961), pp. 173-243; *Army Regulations*, pp.43-44; Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, pp.102-03; Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 141; Atkinson, to the Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. no. 350, 15 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 66, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, one lobby in the army was against allowing so much leave, as furlough reduced the frontline strength. But Major General Birdwood cautioned that furlough was necessary for both economic and physical reasons and for smooth recruitment. Most of the soldiers were from the agricultural families. So, during harvests, when extra hands were necessary in their farms, they demanded furlough. If they were not allowed leave, Birdwood warned, then not only would they be alienated, but also in future no small farmers' younger sons (whom the army adored) would join. Again, enough accommodation for all the soldiers' wives did not exist in the lines. So for domestic reasons, soldiers must be allowed to visit their families. Birdwood's view was similar to the report submitted by the Punjab School in 1857. To prevent another mutiny, the British then attempted to learn about the Indians in greater detail. It accelerated information gathering processes in the colonial state. So the Punjab School was ordered to gather information about the soldiers thought-processes. The Punjab School claimed that the soldiers' mentality could be reconstructed from their ballads and proverbs. After analyzing them, it was clear to the members of the Punjab School that the soldiers hated being away from their land and families for a long time.⁷⁴

Another imperial technique for constructing a combat ethos was by collectively honouring the men of the units, by awarding colours to gallant regiments. There was also inculcation of the belief that to lose colours was worse than death. When the colours were worn out, they were replaced at the government's expense. Colours being a ceremonial incentive, motivating the soldiers by supplying colours, was one way of running the army

⁷⁴ *Army Regulations*, p.43; *Supplementary report*, p.30; *Army committee*, vol. 3, p.548; Memorandum on the distribution of the army in Bengal, para 13, camp Muzaffarnagar, 14 March 1863, Norman minutes.

cheaply. But in the late 19th century this welfare technique proved to be an Achilles heel for the forces in the battle zones. Due to rise in firepower, the troops needed to be scattered in the battlefields, instead of being concentrated around the colours which were meant to provide the rallying points. Colours became an obstacle as they attracted enemy firepower.⁷⁵

IV

Army Bureaucracy as Supplier of Welfare Incentives

The army crafted an enormous bureaucratic apparatus for the quick and efficient delivery of rewards. This logistical burden forced administrative expansion of the colonial state. This focus on the colonial army's internal administration is relevant to the historiography of the colonial state. One School argues that the British Indian state's reach was limited.⁷⁶ This minimalist position is challenged by D.M. Peers who points out that the colonial state was authoritarian, as it was backed by powerful armed forces.⁷⁷ I will argue that the British attempt to introduce European-style army administration was the principal force behind the

⁷⁵ *Army Regulations*, p.96; Circular to officers commanding infantry regiments, Adjutant General's office, camp Moodki, circular no. 27/N, 15 March 1864, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 4; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, Proposals for all regiments to have colours, para 31, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

⁷⁶ Anand A. Yang, *The Limited Raj: Agrarian Relations in Colonial India, Saran District: 1793-1920* (London, 1989).

⁷⁷ Douglas M. Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in India, 1819-1835* (London, 1995).

colonial state's growth. One of the key features of the Western military establishment was the methodical distribution of largesse to the soldiers. This administrative task forced the colonial authorities to collect information about the Indians and to introduce bureaucratic mechanisms which penetrated to the lowest level of the indigenous society.

The army crafted a surveillance scheme for keeping the retired soldiers on the right track. This forced the army to create new administrative posts which extended the reach of the state to all the towns and villages. Pension was distributed through the pension pay masters. India was divided into many administrative circles and for each circle there was such an official. They, along with the district officers (each district had such a military official), monitored the conduct of the retired troops. Their pensions were stopped if they indulged in disloyal activities.⁷⁸

For distributing family pension, the state had to collect information about the private lives of the soldiers-when and whom they married, where their families were stationed, who else constituted the families, the ages of the family members etc. All this resulted in the fusion of public and private domains. The Adjutant General's department was responsible for providing salaries, pensions and gratuities to the soldiers. For investigating the claims of family pensions, and the settle the estates of the dead soldiers, recruiting staff officers were appointed. All these tasks involved an expansion of paperwork. Nominal rolls of the soldiers, maintained both in English and in the vernacular, contained information about the soldiers' careers, their family members' names and the

⁷⁸ Circular by H.W. Norman, Adjutant General, Adjutant General's office, Calcutta, circular no. 2493/A, 25 June 1861, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 1; A.P. Macdonnell, Secy. to the India Govt., Home Department, to the Chief Secy. to the Bengal Govt., Simla, Progs. no. 7056, 8 July 1887, Proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Aug. 1887, Judicial Department, W.B.S.A.

villages in which they resided. When military personnel died, then vernacular notices were sent to their heirs. These contained information about when and where they should present themselves. Occasionally civil administration got fused with the military set-up for aiding in such tasks. The soldiers' relatives applying from Purneah and Darjeeling had to correspond with the collectors of the respective districts for getting in touch with their family members within various regiments scattered in India.⁷⁹

The army's demand for plots forced the expansion of the Raj's rural administrative set up and this process started in the last half of the 18th century. Land was collected through the revenue department. The residents and the district collectors were in charge of acquiring land. Such duties involved lot of paperwork. These officials had to maintain registers containing the names, ranks and ages of the soldiers, and details of land grants. These documents were then sent to the Governor General who passed them on to the Board of Revenue. The grantees were given money by the government for buying agricultural implements. This money was distributed through the collectors. They had to inform the army pay masters every month about what was going on. After their retirement, soldiers got plots from the army, where they constructed their own houses. On the death of the soldiers, the land passed to their heirs who paid 1/10th of the produce to the zamindars and a low rent to the government. If they failed to pay the zamindars and the Sarkar, the plots were taken away and sold to the highest bidder.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 149, 161, 166; Circular by Norman, Adjutant General's office, Calcutta, circular no. 2493/A, 25 June 1861, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 1.

⁸⁰ James Colebrook, *Supplement to the Collection of Regulations* (Calcutta, 1807), Regulations for invalided sepoys, 18 Feb. 1789.

Napoleon's statement that an army marched on its stomach is well known. But the colonial army's top brass was so concerned with supplying liquor to the soldiers that it seemed that the troops marched on liquor also. The Commissary General was in charge of storing and distributing the liquor to the soldiers. Two big depots of liquor were Calcutta and Kanpur. Kanpur was the centre from which liquor was sent to various places of north and northwest India for distribution among the detachments.⁸¹ In the 1860s the army went on a godown building spree for storing liquor. Even then the commissariat godowns for storing liquor proved inadequate. So Rs 2863 was spent on converting the cattle sheds in Kanpur into liquor godowns to prevent loss due to evaporation from the casks. In 1861, for converting an unfinished barrack at Peshawar into a liquor godown, the army spent Rs 10,000. Occasionally, the army was more interested in storing liquor than accommodating the wounded and the sick soldiers. Orders were issued that if storage facilities were not available, then the liquor should be stored at the hospitals even at the cost of the patients. At certain places, like in Dinapore, the army encroached on the civilian hospitals and used them for storing liquor.⁸² The Commander-in-Chief was alarmed at the rising rate of liquor consumption among the soldiers. They bought large amounts of alcohol from the bazaars, and got into debt. So, in 1862, canteens were opened which provided the soldiers with

⁸¹ Thompson, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Lieutenant G. Newmarch, Assistant to Chief Engineer, Punjab, to the Military Secy. to the Govt. of Punjab, Lahore Progs. nos. 441, 444, 3 Jan. 1861, 15 Feb. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁸² H. Andrew, Executive Engineer, Dinapore division, to the Superintending Engineer, Bihar Circle, Newmarch, to Major G. Hutchinson, Military Secy. to Govt. of Punjab, Lahore, Thompson, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Fort William, 12 Jan. 1861, 25 Jan. 1861, 5 Feb. 1861, Progs. nos. 442-43, M.D.P. March 1861.

limited amounts of alcohol.⁸³

The Quarter Master General of the army's task was housing the soldiers and upkeep of their barracks. The soldiers demolished old lines themselves. However, when they constructed new lines, the P.W.D. cooperated with the commanding officers, if the task exceeded the capacity of army's military engineers. Each barrack had deep wells which did not become dry even during summer. Boring apparatuses for the wells were provided by the P.W.D.⁸⁴

Construction and repairing of the latrines, and construction of watering troughs (for watering the horses) was done by the Military Works Service. In each station, the medical officers guided the commanding officers in regard to sanitation. The sanitary officers were responsible for testing the liquor supplied to the soldiers. For the above mentioned tasks, the army needed many doctors even in peacetime. The army wanted Indian doctors, as they were cheap and easily available. The army's demand for medical personnel probably forced the government to establish medical colleges, and this encouraged the growth of the medical profession in India. The army recruited Indian doctors from the medical colleges of

⁸³ Circular by Johnson, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no. 3061, 25 June 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2.

⁸⁴ *Army Regulations*, p.81; Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts, brigades, stations and cantonments, circular no.32/E, 22 Feb. 1865, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 5; Lieutenant Colonel R. Phayre, Quarter Master General, to the Secy. to the Bombay Govt., Military Department, From the offg. Deputy Quarter Master General, to the Quarter Master General, Davidson to Birch, Balfour and Lieutenant Colonel R.S. Simpson, Military Finance Commissioners, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. nos. 362, 368-69, 411, 9 Jan. 1861, 31 Jan. 1861, 1 Feb. 1861, 6 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

V

Soldiers' Grievances and the Army's Responses

The limits of British policy to construct loyalty through the welfare bureaucracy, become clear from the soldiers' perceptions, which are evident from their petitions. An action-reaction dialectic shaped the interaction between the army personnel and the military bureaucracy. The troops demanded redress if they perceived a qualitative or quantitative decline in the distribution of incentives. The bureaucracy responded favourably. The texture of demands and the army's response were shaped by the theoretical paradigm through which the soldiers viewed the army and vice versa. The troops viewed their relations with the army as partly contractual and partly patriarchal. At times the soldiers bargained because they felt that the army had not fulfilled all the obligations of the contract. Occasionally, the troops demanded more because they conceived that the army, being their guardian, would oblige them.

As the Raj monopolized the military labour market of India, the potential soldiers had no other employers to fall back upon. Being aware of their weak position in the power game, they never challenged the Sarkar directly. So the demands of the soldiers were always clothed as 'humble petitions'.⁸⁶ Being dependent on the army for sustenance, the

⁸⁵ *Army Regulations*, pp. 83, 115; Dr. J. Forsyth, Inspector General, Medical Department, to Birch, Military Department, Fort William, Progs. no.147, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁸⁶ For example: The humble petition of Mir Jafir, late commandant of 2nd Jezailchees and Subadar in Coke's Rifles, to General Robert Napier, Military Department, Fort William, Progs. nos. 449-50, 14 Oct. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

soldiers conceived the war machine as their 'mother' who breast-fed them and cherished her sons.⁸⁷ They felt that by destroying the army they would get nothing, just as children would derive no benefits by destroying their mother. Hence, to get their dues, they pressured the army, but never aimed to break it. So open mutinies were rare. The realities of the power structure and their intellectual paradigm made them somewhat fatalistic. The soldiers' view as regards service in the army was 'Kabhi Suk Aur Kabhi Dhuk, Angrez Ka Naukar.'⁸⁸

After 1857, the British were neither bent on revenge on all the Indians, nor did they want to stop their recruitment. This was because they understood that, with the limited number of white troops available to them, they had to depend on the Indians whether they liked it or not. For the 1857 catastrophe, the British held responsible their faulty policies and not the soldiers' mentality. The annexation of Awadh and mismanagement by the British officers were regarded as the principal causes of the uprising.⁸⁹ Therefore the imperialists attempted to chalk out policies which suited the Indian soldiers' nature. The Indians were not portrayed as untrustworthy by nature, or as incarnations of evil. The British viewed them neither as machines nor as animals. In imperial eyes, the soldiers were

⁸⁷ Wilson, *Madras Cavalry*, p.71.

⁸⁸ The proverb meant according to the MacMunn 'Sometimes Pleasure Sometimes Pain, The Servant of the English'. MacMunn, *The Armies of India* (1911, reprint, new Delhi, 1991), p.212. An accurate translation would be 'Whether in Pleasure or in Pain, I am the Servant of the English.'

⁸⁹ Field Marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* (London, 1897, reprint, 1898), pp.231-44; MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp.82-105; *Supplementary report*, pp.97.

not automatons, but ordinary men of flesh and blood with feelings, passions and prejudices, who must be treated sympathetically. The British officers were warned that their arrogance and intolerance had caused 1857. Evangelicalism was on the run. The declared policy was that the religious customs and prejudices of the Indians should be respected.⁹⁰

Occasionally the soldiers' demands were shaped by their religious scruples, and the authorities gave in to the soldiers' pressure. In 1860, a Sikh regiment demanded borax and ghee for washing their hair. On religious grounds, they refused to use the marine soap provided by the army. In the end, the army, instead of supplying 2 maunds of marine soap, offered to each regiment 8 maunds of borax and 10 maunds of ghee.⁹¹ When the ordinary Indians were not getting enough rice to eat, the soldiers, aware of their special bargaining power, got costly ghee from the army.

The army could not afford to be tough while discharging soldiers, because it wanted a special collaborative relationship with the Indian populace who manned the Raj's ultimate line of defence. During the demobilization of the 13th Punjab Infantry's personnel at Meerut in 1861, the army decided to provide all the men over 8 years service, gratuities amounting to 12 months' pay. This scheme failed to satisfy them. So, to stifle protests, many were promoted before being discharged. This enabled them to enjoy higher social

⁹⁰ *Supplementary report*, pp.30, 65-66; *Army Regulations*, p.94; To officers commanding districts, divisions and brigades, by Haythorne, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no.77/N, 23 July 1864, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 4.

⁹¹ Thompson, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Fort William, Progs. no. 43, 22 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

status, pay and other privileges. The rest were absorbed in the Meerut Police.⁹²

Frequently, the Indian officers protested. As they were politically and militarily more important than the privates, the army could not afford to alienate them. In 1861 the Central Indian Horse was amalgamated with the Meade's Horse as part of the overall military policy to reduce the Indian Army's size in the mutiny's aftermath. The amalgamation of these two units demanded the discharge of 22 Jemadars and 49 Dufadars. To get rid of them, the army offered gratuity amounting to 6 months' pay. They rejected this offer and demanded bigger gratuities along with employment in the mounted police of Punjab. The salary of the cavalry police was higher than that of the irregular cavalry. In addition, the Indian officers demanded promotion. Colonel J. Travers, the officer on the spot, lost his nerve, and urged the government to accept the demands. He warned there would otherwise be gross indiscipline. The storm of 1857 had just subsided and the government decided not to take any risk. The gratuity was increased to 12 month's pay and all the discharges in the Bengal Cavalry were made voluntary.⁹³

All these incidents also unnerved the Secretary of State in the metropole. To prevent any probable outbreaks, Charles Wood decided to play safe by ordering that those Purbiya regiments, which had remained loyal during 1857-59, should be retained. He reminded the army that when the units were raised, the men had had natural expectations of

⁹² Scott, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Calcutta, 10 July 1861, Roll of the 13th Punjab Infantry who appeared before the invaliding committee, Meerut, Progs. no. 103, 20 May 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

⁹³ Extract from the proceedings of the Govt. of India, in the Foreign Department, Progs. no. 538, 15 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts and regiments of native cavalry, by Haythorne, circular no.82/N, 19 Aug. 1863, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 3.

permanent employment. So even if the total disbandment of some of the units was necessary to avoid large-scale disturbances, as many personnel as possible should be retained and, the rest should be discharged with bigger gratuities.⁹⁴

The soldiers reacted to the malfunctioning of the welfare bureaucracy. Mir Jafir, the late commandant of the 2nd Jezailchee Corps complained in 1860 to General Robert Napier that about one and half years previously, the government had promised him a pension of Rs 200 per month. However, he was yet to receive any money. Napier sent the petition to Fred Roberts who was looking after the pensioners' claims.⁹⁵

Occasionally the army acted without any direct pressure from below. It assumed that if it did not supply rewards to the soldiers then there would be mutinies. This overreaction on part of the sahibs was probably due to an acute sense of powerlessness. The Indian population ran into millions. White terror was represented by the British soldiers and their supply was limited.⁹⁶ They were conscious of the necessity of not alienating the collaborators needed for manning the coercive machinery. To meet the emergency during 1857, the army raised many temporary local levies and also expanded the size of the existing irregular units. After the crisis was over, the army had no use for units like the Awadh Police Cavalry and the Hodson's Horse. Even though these men, facing discharge,

⁹⁴ To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, nos. 59, 98. 14 Feb. 1860, 8 March 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

⁹⁵ Mir Jafir, to Napier, Progs. nos.449-50, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

⁹⁶ General George Chesney, *Indian Polity: A View of Administration in India* (1894, reprint, New Delhi, 1976), pp. 206, 208, 211, 216, 223.

did not pose any direct threat, the army lacked the guts to throw them out without any monetary compensation. However, the volume of rewards awarded was linked with the level of loyalty displayed. The army favoured the Punjabis who actively aided in crushing the revolt and discriminated against the men from the Ganga-Yamuna doab who actually engineered the rebellion. Those Indians who joined the British side before November 1858, when imperial victory was still uncertain, were given gratuities amounting to 6 months pay (to those from Punjab) and 3 months pay (to the personnel from the Ganga-Yamuna doab) on being discharged. Again, those who joined the British when the rebel cause was hopeless were given gratuities amounting to 3 months pay (to the Punjabis) and 2 months pay (to the Hindustanis), on being discharged.⁹⁷

Conclusion:

The army supplied a host of incentives to the soldiers to project a benevolent image in order to legitimize its authority over its personnel and to extract sacrifices from them. A disciplinary infrastructure to control the troops was enmeshed with the army's policy of 'caring' for its men. However the army's control over the soldiers was mainly hegemonic rather than coercive. The imperialists aimed to drive a cleavage among the Indian privates and the officers by supplying the latter with a greater amount of rewards. The welfare scheme gave adequate space to the soldiers for protest by petitions. And the soldiers were conscious of the special position they enjoyed vis a vis the civilians in the colonial framework. Due to the presence of an extensive bureaucratic machinery, the army, by its

⁹⁷ From the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, to the Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. no. 726, 11 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

quick response to the soldiers' demands, was able to contain the latter's grievances. Thus the army was able to keep its loyalty mechanism intact.

The reward structure evolved in halting stages. 1857 represented both continuity and change as far as the evolution of the welfare bureaucracy was concerned. The Mutiny was no break for incentives like military jagirs etc. However in the pre 1857 period, due to Bentinck's policy of reducing expenditure, the state abolished many privileges like batta etc. But after 1857, as a reaction to the rebellion, the state became more generous. Privileges were not only reintroduced but also elaborated and systematized. Further, the imperialists learnt from 1857 and became more sensitive to the Indians' religious sensibilities. Another reason for the implementation of the elaborate welfare network in the second half of 19th century was because the army was anxious that the quantum of welfare measures provided were inadequate for generating loyalty. As the British were not confident of their position, there was much debate within the army about how best to implement the welfare mechanism. The starting point of this programme was 1859: the immediate aftermath of the Mutiny; and it reached its peak just before 1914 due to the imperial attempt to gear up the army in response to the worsening international scenario.

The colonial army provides us a window to see the colonial state's structure. Since the army lacked the requisite administrative machinery for distributing supplies, it cooperated with the Raj's civilian bureaucracy, like the collectors, P.W.D. The multifarious demands of supplying the soldiers and the necessity of watching their activities transformed the night watchman state into an ever expanding bureaucratic state. The colonial state consolidated itself by a balanced synthesis of indigenous elements (like bazaars etc.) and imported Western techniques (like gratuity etc.). Colonialism depended on collaboration,

and military collaboration was most vital. The welfare mechanism, and not merely brute force, prevented rebellions among the indigenous military collaborators. And this sustained colonialism in South Asia. Further, welfare measures directed towards the units stationed outside the subcontinent made it possible for the British to use the Indian Army as an instrument of power projection throughout Asia.

Chapter 4

Logistics and the Construction of Loyalty: The Welfare Mechanism

The British military domination of the subcontinent was mainly possible because Indians joined the colonial army and remained loyal to it. This was partly because the British introduced an innovative bureaucratic structure for constructing the colonial military. One of the principal elements introduced by the British for structuring the army, was the welfare package for the soldiers. This package included a series of incentives with which the imperialists' attempted to purchase the soldiers loyalty. This policy enabled the colonial army to attract and retain Indian manpower and to prevent any large-scale military rebellion after 1857. The incentives offered to the soldiers probably created bonds of loyalty between the troops and the army's high command. An impersonal loyalty structure replaced the personal loyalty of the soldiers to their clan and tribal chiefs, which was present in pre British armies.¹

The British conquest of India was mainly possible because of the low military effectiveness of the Indian potentates' military forces. In India, the jagirdars (landlords) were responsible for raising military contingents in exchange for the assignment of land revenue by the monarchies. Since the jagirdars enlisted and maintained the troops who were from their own clans, the soldiers were loyal to them. In the Rajput Army, the jagirs were more or less hereditary. When the jagirdars died, then their sons served in the force and

¹ William Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls: Its Organization and Administration* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1962), pp. 3-27, 36-44, 296-300.

enjoyed the revenue assignments, even if they were incompetent.² This hereditary principle implied the absence of professionalism. Due to the absence of a regular bureaucracy, the welfare schemes for the soldiers remained *ad hoc*, and the jagirdars lined their pockets. The lack of cohesiveness of these forces was because the distribution of rewards in such armies remained chaotic. Pay and pension remained in arrears. Medical facilities and the commissariats were non-existent. Promotions were based on nepotism. To avert defeat, Mahadji Sindia and Ranjit Singh tried to Europeanize their armies by bureaucratizing the distribution of incentives to the soldiers. They tried to eliminate the jagirdars and bring the armies under their direct administration, so that the soldiers would be loyal to the state. But their reforms were too few and too late.³

To construct the Indian Army, the British depended on two sources: the professional military forces of Europe, and indigenous military traditions. One of the chief instruments, which enabled the British to craft a new type of army, was the systematic supply of incentives to the soldiers. The British imitated these incentives from the Western standing armies. The professional armies, which emerged in the West from 1700 onwards, had regular wages, graduated-wage scales, uniforms, and a hierarchy of ranks. The state

² R.K. Saxena, *The Army of the Rajputs: A Study of 18th Century Rajputana* (Udaipur, 1989), pp. 2, 15, 23.

³ Lewis Ferdinand Smith, *A Sketch of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the Regular Corps Formed and Commanded by the Europeans in the Service of the Native Princes of India with Details of the Principal Events and Actions of the late Maratha War* (Calcutta, 1805); Herbert Compton, *A Particular Account of the European Military Adventurers of Hindustan from 1784-1803* (1892, reprint, Oxford, 1976); B.K. Sinha, *The Pindaris: 1798-1818* (Calcutta, 1971), pp.4-5, 15-16, 184-85; Henry Steinbach, *The Country of the Sikhs* (n.d., reprint, New Delhi 1977), pp.28-29, 72-86; Fauja Singh Bajwa, *Military System of the Sikhs: 1799-1849* (New Delhi, 1964).

took over from the private contractors the responsibilities of feeding, clothing and equipping the military personnel. This introduced the concept of contract between the impersonal armed forces' establishments and the military labourers, which replaced the feudal concept of hereditary service among the landlords and the retainers. As the troops shifted their loyalty from the intermediary lords to the polities, the armies from quasi-private enterprises became public institutions.⁴ A similar transformation in the armed forces occurred in India. However the colonial setting modified some of the incentives which were provided to the troops. Since the British could not utilize Indian soldiers' national sentiment, it became very important to supply them with monetary and non-monetary incentives, at the right time and right place, and in adequate quantities. So the colonial army created an administrative machinery to provide various types of rewards to the soldiers. The bureaucratic mechanism was geared towards supplying items for the troops' welfare, is called here the 'welfare mechanism'. The welfare bureaucracy was flexible, and responded to the soldiers' grievances. We can infer that by caring for its personnel, the army integrated the troops and prevented desertions, mutinies and treacheries that were endemic in the pre colonial militias.

The term logistics is used to mean the incentives supplied for the soldiers' creature comforts. The interdependence of logistics and loyalty is yet to be analyzed thoroughly in the context of either international, or Indian military history. C. Jones shows that the *Ancien Regime* was able to attract volunteers and boost their morale in combat by providing health care, accommodation etc. J.A. Lynn writes that when the soldiers had no sympathy with the

⁴ Martin Blumenson, 'The Development of the Modern Military', *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1980), pp.670-82; Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495-1715*(London, 1992, reprint, 1997), p.80.

cause for which they fought, it was necessary to buy their obedience with pay and food. His observation is all the more applicable to the colonial army, as the sepoys were volunteers with no attachment to the imperial cause. L.M. Crowell briefly describes the administrative structure of the Madras Army's logistics, but fails to link it with the soldiers' loyalty. Tai Yong Tan shows the welfare measures introduced to prevent disturbances among the ex-soldiers, and to strengthen the loyalty of the serving troops in Punjab after World War I.⁵

This chapter analyzes the welfare package offered by the imperialists to the soldiers. Section I shows the varied types of tangible goods and non-tangible incentives supplied to the soldiers. Section II portrays the relationship between logistics and discipline. The next section points out the linkages between the military-financial interests of the Raj and the welfare bureaucracy. The fourth section charts the varied facets of the bureaucratic machinery oriented towards the soldiers' benefits, and the last section paints the imperial response to popular grievances.

I

Benefits available to the Soldiers

The imperial aim was to raise the combat efficiency of the army by inculcating bravery and loyalty among the rank and file. The British assumption was that valour and faithfulness

⁵ Colin Jones, 'The Welfare of the French Foot Soldiers', *History*, vol. LXV (1980), pp.193-213; J.A. Lynn, 'The History of Logistics and Supplying War', in idem., (ed), *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Colorado and Boulder, 1993), pp.23-24; Lorenzo M. Crowell, 'Logistics in the Madras Army circa 1830', *War & Society*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1992), pp.1-33; Tai Yong Tan 'Maintaining the Military Districts: Civil-Military Integration and the District Soldiers' Boards in the Punjab, 1919-1930', *MAS*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1994), pp. 833-74.

could be awakened and sustained by distributing rewards among the troops. So they provided a series of benefits which were absent in the pre British armed forces. The incentive scheme evolved from the late 18th century onwards, and underwent modifications and expansion in the 1857 Mutiny's aftermath. Greater rewards were reaped by the units destined for the battle zones and overseas service as those activities involved greater stress and strain, long separation from families and physical hardships.

Tangible benefits can be classified into monetary and non-monetary incentives. The most important monetary benefits were wages. The Indian Army, from the late 18th century onwards, paid the soldiers regularly in cash, because the British assumed that such continuity and regularity gave the troops a sense of loyalty, in other words that their sense of security tied them to the army. Paying salaries punctually in cash was an important innovation introduced by the British in the subcontinent. Even in the 19th century, Nepal, though trying to model her troops on the West, paid them by granting land. Many months of arrears of pay were common in the Khalsa Army, and caused successive mutinies. Extra money was allotted to the colonial soldiers for encouraging overseas service. After 1859, those irregular cavalry units which went to Aden, had their pay increased by one-third.⁶

Were the wages of privates adequate? One School of opinion which, includes Clive Dewey and David Omissi, argues that the soldiers' pay was so high that they were able to

⁶ Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry: Its Organisation and Discipline, 1796-1852* (Calcutta, 1962), pp.139-40; H.L.O. Garrett (ed), C. Grey, *European Adventurers of Northern India, 1785-1849*, (1929, reprint, Madras, 1993), p.29. Lieutenant Colonel Eden Vansittart, *Handbooks for the Indian Army: The Gurkhas* (Calcutta, 1906), p. 44; Major D.M. Probyn, commandant of 1st Sikh Cavalry, to Colonel W. Mayhew, Adjutant General, Calcutta, Progs. no. 594, 14 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Major General J. Michael, Commanding at Aden, to the Adjutant General of the Bombay Army, camp Mhow, Progs. no. 143, 6 Sept. 1859, M.D.P. March 1860, N.A.I.

save a lot from their wages. They sent their savings home, and these remittances reinvigorated the rural economy. R.G. Fox argues that the small peasants sent their younger sons to the army to supplement their families' income.⁷ But others point out that the soldiers' pay was inadequate even for the basic amenities of life.⁸ The salaries of the privates were actually adequate only for the basic necessities of life. Till 1911, the privates were paid Rs 7 per month. In 1861, the government had to spend Rs 9 per month for each soldier's ration. The commissariat did not supply the soldiers except in abnormal times. Even if we assume that the privates took a less varied diet than that provided by the commissariat, their salaries, after various deductions for clothing etc., were just enough for subsistence.⁹ This is clear if we compute the cost of a soldier's basic necessities from table 8. However the Indian officers' salaries, as evident from tables 9 and 10, were large enough to allow savings.

⁷ Clive Dewey, 'Some Consequences of Military Expenditure in British India: The Case of Upper Sind Sagar Doab, 1849-1947', in Dewey (ed), *Arrested Development in India: The Historical Dimension* (Delhi, 1988), pp.93-169; David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London, 1994), pp.59-61, 67; Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (New Delhi, 1990) pp. 43-44.

⁸ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 298, 309-12.

⁹ Mayhew, Adjutant General, to the Secy. of Government of India, Calcutta, Memorandum from Major General A. Becher, Quarter Master General, to the Adjutant General, Calcutta, Progs. nos. 111, 338, 6 Aug. 1861, 31 Aug. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861, Colonel E. Green, Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the Govt. of Bombay, Military Department, Poona, Progs. no. 114, 30 Nov. 1859, M.D.P. March 1860.

Table 8: Prices of Necessary Commodities

Date	Region	Cost of Essential Goods	Remarks
1860	West India	1 Maund of Salt = Rs 1 1 Seer 12 Chattak of Ghee = Rs 1 7 Seer of Pulse = Rs 1 15 Seer of Rice = Rs 1 17 Seer of Wheat = Rs 1	1 Maund = 40 Seer 1 Seer = 2 lb = 16 Chattaks
1890s	India	15 seer of Rice = Rs 1 17 seer of Wheat = Rs 1	A Soldier ate 30 Seer of Wheat or Rice, 3 Seer of Pulse, 30 Chattaks of Ghee and 10 Chattaks of Salt every month.
1900s	India	10 Seer of Rice = Rs 1 13 Seer of Wheat = Rs 1	

Sources: Michael McAlpin, 'Price Movements and Fluctuations in Economic Activity (1860-1947)' in D. Kumar (ed), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, 1757-c.1970*, vol. 2 (1982, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), pp.881-82; Amiya Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry: Its Organisation and Discipline, 1796-1852* (Calcutta, 1962), p.309; W.J. Wilson, *History of the Madras Army*, vol. 1 (Madras, 1882), pp.113-14, vol. 3 (Madras, 1883), p.93; Price in Ajmer, Dec. 1860, Signed Captain A.G. Davidson, Assistant Commissioner, Ajmer, Progs. no.315, 1 Dec. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861, N.A.I.

Table 9: Pay of Regular Infantry

Rank	Amount Per Month			Remarks
	1860s	1870s	1912	
Subadar Major		Rs 125		
Subadar				
- 1 st Class	Rs 70	Rs 100		
- 2 nd Class	Rs 52			
- 3 rd Class	Rs 42			
Jemadar	Rs 28 Anna 8	Rs 30		
Regimental Havildar	Rs 24			
Naik	Rs 12			
Private	Rs 7		Rs 13	In 1860, at Pegu a labourer earned Rs 9 per month (but his job was irregular).

Sources: Colonel L.W. Shakespear, *History of the 2nd King Edwardes Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)*, vol. 1 (Aldershot, 1912), p.29; *Army committee*, vol. 3, p. 651; Colonel G. Balfour, Chief of Military Finance Department, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Calcutta, Progs. no. 330, 17 Aug. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861; Minute on the organization of the army of India, Chap. 2, Pay, para 18, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

Table 10: Pay of the Irregular Cavalry

Rank	Amount Per Month		Remarks
	1860s	1890s	
Risaldar	Rs 150		In real terms the sowars were not paid more than the infantry privates because the former had to contribute for buying their horses. Further, the sowar had to spend Rs 3 Anna 8 per month to maintain a grass cutter who cut grass for the horses. Each horse needed 14 seer of grass daily. Grass was also available in the market at the cost 5 seer for Anna 1.
Resaidar	Rs 80		
Naib Resaidar	Rs 50		
Jemadar	Rs 50		
Dufadar	Rs 30-35		
Naib Dufadar	Rs 28		
Nishanburdar	Rs 24		
Trumpeter	Rs 24-30		
Sowar	Rs 25	Rs 31	

Sources: Lieutenant General W.H. Goodenough and Lieutenant Colonel J.C. Dalton, *The Army Book of the British Empire* (London, 1893), p.468; *Supplementary report*, Appendix A, p.18; Colonel J. Brind, commanding Artillery Division, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Bengal Artillery, Meerut, Lieutenant Colonel C.H. Blunt, commanding 4th Troop, 3rd Brigade Horse Artillery, to Major Bishop, Adjutant General 3rd Brigade, Ambala, Progs. no. 227, 10 April 1861, 23 April 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861; Lieutenant Colonel C.G. Becher, commanding 1st Regiment Beatson's Horse to Captain J.H. Champion, Assistant Adjutant General, Military Department, Camp Kotah, Progs. no.143, 2 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. March 1860, N.A.I.

However, the British officers from 1857 till 1913 were apprehensive that the soldiers' wages were inadequate. They argued that the pay should be increased, because prices and civilian wages were rising. Moreover, they were worried that if the pay were not raised, then the 'martial' groups would prefer the police instead of the army.¹⁰

To tide over the price fluctuations of foodgrains, the army paid extra money, known as *batta*, to the soldiers. In the first half of the 19th century, *batta* was paid to the soldiers for service in 'foreign' areas like Punjab and Sind. But when the Company annexed these two regions, *batta* for the units deployed there was abolished, despite the high price of foodgrains there. This angered the soldiers and was one of the factors in the upheaval in 1857.¹¹ Bartle Frere, the Commissioner of Sind, argued that abolition of *batta* was a mistake as a private could serve in the Ganga valley for Rs 7 per month, but it was impossible for him to serve in Sind even for Rs 10 per month. Sir George Clerk, a civilian official argued against this, saying that *batta* should not be paid for service in northwest India as foodgrains costs in that region had declined.¹² However Frere carried the day, probably because the British were nervous after the Great Mutiny, and after 1857 *batta* was paid for service inside as well as outside India.¹³

¹⁰ *Supplementary report*, pp.4, 16, 19; *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 158.

¹¹ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, pp.299, 301.

¹² *Supplementary report*, p.57; *Peel committee*, p.45.

¹³ Charles Wood to the Governor General, no.58, 14 Jan. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State, N.A.I.

To prevent the possibility of any mutiny when soldiers who were not needed were discharged, the army sweetened the pill by offering them gratuities: the greater the length of service for the Raj, the bigger the reward offered. When the 13th Punjab Infantry's personnel were invalided at Meerut in 1861, those with 20 years of service got pensions as well as gratuity which amounted to 9 months' pay, and those with less than 20 years of service were awarded pensions plus gratuity equivalent to 6 months' pay.¹⁴

There was no retirement age for the soldiers in the pre British Indian armies. Nor was there any provision for old age or disability pensions. In 1760s, the French Army introduced pensions. The British introduced such European techniques in the subcontinent. From 1796 onwards in the Indian Army, there were two types of pension- life and family pensions. For those personnel who were discharged due to physical infirmities, or who had taken voluntary retirement or whose terms of service were over, the army paid money every month till their death, keeping in view their past service. In the 1860s, privates with 20 years of service got pensions of Rs 3.5 per month, while those with 40 years of service got Rs 7 per month.¹⁵ For signal service against the mutineers of 1857, Mowla Buksh of

¹⁴ Roll of the men of 13th Punjab Infantry who appeared before the invaliding committee at Meerut, 20 May 1861, Lieutenant T.H. Scott Commanding late 13th Punjab Infantry to the Assistant Adjutant General. Calcutta, Progs. nos. 104, 187, 10 July 1861, 15 July 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

¹⁵ Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: an Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (1974, Reprint, DehraDun, 1988), pp. 201-2; Colin Jones, 'The Military Revolution and the Professionalisation of the French Army under the *Ancien Regime*', in Clifford J. Rogers (ed), *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, (Boulder, 1995), p. 164; K.S. Lal, 'The Striking power of the Army of the Sultanate', *Journal of Indian History*, vol. LV, (1977), p.106; *Supplementary report*, p.37; Roll of men of Nagpur Force transferred to the pension establishment, Progs. no. 388, 28 Aug. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

the irregular cavalry, after serving for 36 years and 2 months, got the pension to which he would have been entitled only after 40 years of service.¹⁶ This scheme of providing extra money was designed to activate loyalty among the troops for combat against possible rebels. Soldiers who showed extraordinary bravery in campaigns also acquired higher pensions. Naib Resaldar H.M. Khan of the Poona Horse retired in 1861 after serving for 43 years. He was eligible for a pension of Rs 20 per month. But due to his excellent performance in the assault on Asirgarh in 1818, he was granted an extraordinary pension of Rs 50 per month.¹⁷

In the pre colonial Hindu armies, family pension was available only for the officers. When they died, their relatives were given villages by the king. The British converted this welfare measure into cash and extended it to the privates. The imperial aim was that the scheme of family pensions would attach not only the soldiers, but also their families to the service of colonialism. If the heirs were women or old men, the pensions were paid till their death. If dead soldiers had no surviving parents, then the pensions were paid to their sons

¹⁶ Lieutenant H. Collier Commanding Ramgarh Cavalry to the Adjutant General, Calcutta, Colonel H.W. Norman, Deputy Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Calcutta, Balfour, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Calcutta, Captain B.E. Bacon, Assistant Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department to the Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. nos. 24-26, 37, 28 June 1861, 30 July 1861, 17 Sept. 1861, 1 Oct. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

¹⁷ Capt. R.H. Westropp, commandant Poona Horse to the Assistant Adjutant General, Poona, Colonel W.F. Marriot, Acting Secy. to Bombay Govt. Military Department to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Report by Lieutenant Colonel J. Hannington, offg. Controller of Military Finance, Fort William, Progs. no. 421, 13 Sept. 1860, 22 Oct. 1860, 28 Dec. 1860, M.D.P. March 1861.

till they became adults, or to their daughters till their marriages.¹⁸ If soldiers died fighting gallantly, then an extraordinary lump sum, instead of a mere family pension, was granted. In 1860 the mother of one brave Resaldar Wachan Singh, received Rs 1000 after his death.¹⁹ Such payments were designed to generate aggressiveness among the soldiers during combat, as the troops were sure that, even if they died fighting, their loved ones would be cared for by the government.

The army hoped to activate the soldiers' combat ardour through the wound pension, which was introduced in 1852. This sort of pension was given to personnel who lost their limbs while fighting, or became so seriously wounded that they had to be discharged from the army. The magnitude of this pension depended on the nature of wounds. Privates with minor injuries received Rs 4 per month while those with serious wounds received Rs 5 per month.²⁰

To enhance group morale among the soldiers, and to make them more amenable to discipline, the Western professional armies provided uniforms to them. Uniforms for soldiers were a novelty in India. The Maratha Army had no uniforms. The Indian army

¹⁸ Ravindra Kumar Sharma, 'The Military System of the Mewar (Udaipur) State (Ca. 800 to 1947)', *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 30 (1986), p. 120; *Supplementary report*, p.136; Extract from the proceedings of the Govt. of India in the Foreign Department, Progs. no. 313, 20 Jan. 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

¹⁹ To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no.139, 3 April 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

²⁰ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p.145-6; Major H.K. Burne, offg. Deputy Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, to the Deputy Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. no. 262, 8 March 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

supplied uniforms annually, free of cost, to soldiers who went abroad. In 1859, each of the 5000 soldiers who went to China got 2 pairs of greatcoats.²¹ An allowance was provided to the soldiers, for maintaining their uniforms.²²

Before combat, the Rajputs used to take opium to reduce their nervousness. The British replaced opium with alcohol, because contemporary British medical opinion believed that alcohol cured many diseases. So during epidemics, liquor flowed freely. John Keegan writes that drink was an important palliative of nervous tension while waiting for action. Just before battle, it was a psychological necessity. Taking alcohol before battles was common in the European armies, and this trend the British introduced in India. When the Indian soldiers faced extra strain, as during campaigns or overseas deployments, they were provided with extra amounts of rum and malt liquor to keep their morale intact. Each soldier generally was supplied with 1 dram of rum per day; but during war and epidemics, the army provided each soldier with 2 drams per day. Sick soldiers were allowed to buy rum at a subsidized price from the army canteens. Alcohol was also the best antidote to the boredom inherent in the long garrison duties.²³

²¹ Tallett, *War and Society*, p. 120; S.N. Sen, *The Military System of the Marathas* (Calcutta, 1928, reprint, 1979), p.72; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no. 58, 14 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State; From the Secretary of State for India to the Military Department, Fort William, Progs. no. 215, 11 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

²² *Army Regulations, India*, vol. 2, *Regulations and Orders for the Army* (Calcutta, 1913), p.112.

²³ Tony Hayter, 'The Army and the First British Empire, 1714-1783', in David Chandler and Ian Beckett (eds), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (Oxford, 1994), p. 111; John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York, 1993, reprint, 1994), p. 249; John Keegan, *The Price of Admiralty: The Evolution of Naval Warfare* (1988, reprint, New York, 1989), p. 70; Saxena, *Army of the Rajputs*, p. 355; *Army Regulations*, p.115; Circular by Lieutenant Colonel E.B. Johnson, offg. Adjutant General, Adjutant

The army was apprehensive about the soldiers' health, because much of the war machine's strength depended on it. The British in India were obviously influenced by the European military establishments' assumption that supplying medical care for the sick raised morale, and encouraged men to fight. In 1870, hospital facilities were available for 5% of the colonial soldiers.²⁴ The Indian Army provided extra health care for treating battlefield wounds during campaigns. Each infantry regiment had 1 doctor during peacetime, but when it was on active service, it was awarded 1 surgeon, 1 assistant surgeon, 1 assistant apothecary and 1 dresser.²⁵

Some aspects of the Indian Army's reward structure were unique by European standards because the British absorbed some indigenous elements. Land-grants to the soldiers, which the British retained for the Indian Army, had no place in the professional European armies. This incentive was a continuation of the pre colonial military tradition of issuing hereditary land grants (jagirs) to the soldiers. Most of the soldiers came from small peasant families, and had a stake in the land.²⁶ The army encouraged them by dangling the

General's office, Simla, circular no. 3061, 25 June 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2, N.A.I.

²⁴ Tallett, *War and Society*, p. 111; Minute on the organization of the native army of India, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 36, 43, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

²⁵ Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Wilson, *Historical Records of the Fourth Prince of Wales Own Regiment Madras Light Cavalry* (Madras 1877), p.45; Colonel L.W. Shakespear, *History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)*, vol. 1, (Aldershot, 1912), p.3; Colonel H. Marshall, Acting Secy. to the Govt. of Madras, Military Department, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Fort Saint George, Progs. no. 41, 3 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

²⁶ Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Art of War in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 1984), pp.75-86; Omissi, *Sepoy*

prospect of jagirs in front of them. For exceptional performances, like raising soldiers for the Raj, saving the lives of British officers, suffering wounds in battles etc., the army awarded such personnel land. Aitah Mohammed Khan was a Resaldar in the Bunoo Police Cavalry. During 1857, he volunteered for service in Hindustan along with 112 of his tribesmen. They were in the Multan Horse and fought against the rebels in Delhi. After the rebellion, he and his followers were granted jagirs (each worth Rs 1000), in perpetuity.²⁷

When it was not possible to provide cooked food to soldiers during emergencies, the army provided, at controlled prices in the bazaars set up under military supervision, raw food grains which the men had to cook. Bazaars were an indigenous tradition which the British absorbed. When local supplies were not forthcoming, such markets were set up and they had at least 3 days supplies. The commanding officers maintained registers which contained the names of all the baniahs (Hindu businessmen) who were allowed to join the market. The baniahs had to pay a certain sum to the regiments for being allowed to do business. One baniah supplied either a company or half a squadron of cavalry. The baniahs occasionally supplied on credit. No mahajans (moneylenders) were allowed in the bazaars, because the army feared that the soldiers might get into debt. Indian officers were appointed as kotwals, who saw that baniahs supplied proper quantities of cereals to the soldiers.²⁸

and the Raj, p.50; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 66, 11 Oct.1875, Norman minutes.

²⁷ Captain J.B. Lind Commanding Pathan Cavalry, to Major R.C. Lawrence, Military Secy. to the Punjab Govt., Lahore, Progs. no.180, 13 July 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

²⁸ Sarkar, *Art of War*, p.191; *Army Regulations*, p.82; *Peel committee*, p.4.

The history of warfare shows, however, that soldiers were not willing to die just for tangible incentives. The missing link was symbolic rewards. Such tokens conferred honour and glory: the intangible factors that led men to war. The pre colonial armies had at their disposal robes of honour, daggers etc. which were awarded to exceptional warriors. But the British replaced these with rewards like medals imported from the West. Charles I in 1643 first introduced the silver medal for those men who had performed well under difficult circumstances. Individual loyalty and gallantry were honoured by supplying Distinguished Service Medals to the Indian soldiers after extraordinary performances.²⁹ For honouring regimental pride, the 2nd Gurkha Rifles, which participated in the successful Kabul-Kandahar march, was awarded bronze stars in February 1882.³⁰ Though such medals were of little intrinsic value, they had value within the armed forces: John Keegan rightly says that the cultural ethos of the military organizations was different from the civilian world.³¹

Orders and ranks were two awards which had some markers of status, along with the financial incentives associated with them. In 1837, Bentinck introduced the Order of Merit. The Indian Order of Merit was given for showing extraordinary bravery in combat. Those who bagged this award had their salaries and pensions increased, and were allowed

²⁹ Ian Roy, 'Towards the Standing Army, 1660-1702', in Chandler et. al., *History of the British Army*, p.44; Keegan, *History of Warfare*, p. 270 ; *Army Regulations*, pp.67, 70 ; Z.A. Desai and W.E. Begley (eds), *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan*, tr. by A.R. Fuller, (New Delhi 1990), pp. 91-92; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no.3, 8 Jan. 1861, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

³⁰ Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, p. 104.

³¹ Keegan, *History of Warfare*, p. XVI.

to put the letters IOM beside their names.³²

Ranks were a sort of carrot which, the British believed, encouraged the soldiers to risk their lives repeatedly. This was because higher ranks meant greater prestige, along with financial perquisites. So, for gallantry in combat, the troops were promoted. In 1860, a private named Ranjit Singh, was promoted to a Naik after being wounded in action.³³

II

Welfare Measures as a Disciplinary Mechanism.

Incentives were tools of domination as they were supplied to the soldiers with the aim of encouraging proper behaviour. When the soldiers misbehaved, welfare measures were denied to them. The commanding officers had the discretionary power to give non-military jobs to soldiers, either during their service tenure, or after their retirement. For such jobs, soldiers required recommendations and good character certificates from their officers. This became a technique for extracting obedience from soldiers as such jobs involved less strenuous duties and the troops continued to draw military salaries or pensions along with the wages of the extra-military jobs. One Havildar of the 48th Madras Infantry, Munniapah, being in the good books of his commanding officer, became a Sub-Overseer in the P.W.D.

³² Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 146; Wilson, *Madras Cavalry*, p.66; *Army Regulations*, pp.69-70; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no. 50, 24 Jan. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

³³ To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no. 77, 24 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

in Moulmein in 1861. If the soldiers on deputation misbehaved, they were removed from the civil departments.³⁴

Good Conduct Pay was another scheme introduced in 1837 for disciplining the soldiers. Those who served obediently received extra pay. The army's plan was to encourage long-term loyalty. The longer the soldiers remained loyal, the greater was their Good Conduct Pay. After 6 years of service it became Rs 1 per month and for 10 years of service, it increased to Rs 2 per month. However, the commanding officers could deny this extra pay on grounds of misconduct. There was disagreement in the army over this scheme: some officers wanted to link discipline with combat effectiveness. They argued that the higher pay should depend, not merely on the proper conduct and length of service, but also on the tactical efficiency of the troops.³⁵

The breakdown of discipline in 1857 forced the army to strengthen the link between obedient behaviour and wages. The Punjab School argued that ambition and satisfaction could be induced among the soldiers by a graduated scale of pay for each rank. The authorities hoped that this would satisfy the loyal veterans, and would discourage rebelliousness among the junior troops, as they were bound to gain economically by

³⁴ *Army Regulations*, pp.89, 267; Extract from the proceedings of the Governor General of India in the Military Department, Progs. nos. 412, 614, 18 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Memo by Colonel E. Haythorne, Adjutant General, Adjutant General's office, Ambala, circular no. 63/N, 27 March 1865, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 5.

³⁵ Omissi, *Sepoy and the Raj*, p.67; *Army committee*, vol.1-A, *Minority report*, p.159; Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts and native infantry regiments, by Haythorne, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no. 97/N, 17 Aug. 1864, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 4, Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 26, 30, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

remaining loyal in the long run. This scheme was geared to encourage loyalty among the younger soldiers, as the life pension scheme had attractions only for the old soldiers who were going to retire (and most of the rebels of 1857 had been newly enlisted recruits). Under this scheme the privates got Rs 6 per month for the 1st year of service, Rs 7 per month from the 2nd year of their service, and Rs 8 per month after 15 years of service. Finally, after 20 years of service, they received Rs 8.8 per month. Graduated scales of pay existed for the Indian officers also, but they were based not only on seniority, but also on merit as assessed by the British officers.³⁶ The power of assessing the capabilities of the Indian officers, enabled the British officers to control them.

A group within the army wanted to increase the life pension of the Indian officers and the privates. This group argued that the Indian officers, with their high social position and the influence they enjoyed in their local communities, should not be alienated. Colonel L.C. Dunsterville, Commandant of the 20th Punjab Regiment in 1912, warned that the low rate of the privates' pension was a source of discontent among the Sikhs. Major General F.J. Aylmer argued that the army introduced the life pension with the aim of extracting long-term good behaviour from the soldiers. The underlying assumption was that the troops, in the hope of getting a pension after retirement, remained obedient (as 'misbehaviour' would result in discharges). But as the pension had remained the same for the last hundred years, it should be raised. W. Meyer, a civilian official, challenged this line of thinking. Meyer argued that it was improper to pamper the soldiers, who were mercenaries. Moreover, he continued, in the civil departments, one received a pension after 30 years of service while

³⁶ *Supplementary report*, pp.18, 36, 55; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 5, Pension system, para 2, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

conditions in the army were improving. Before 1857, soldiers received a pension after 40 years of service. In 1878, they received pension after 32 years of service. And now they were receiving it after 25 years of service. Aylmer argued against this that the soldiers' job was more arduous than that of the civilians were and there was no other option than to keep the mercenaries contented.³⁷ However, in the end, due to the army's penny-pinching policy, the pension was not raised despite the threat to discipline.

Frequently in history, the breakdown of supplies has resulted in the disintegration of military forces. Lack of food resulted in a decline of morale, which resulted in desertions, and the weakening of discipline, which culminated in pillage and plunder, thus resulting in peasant violence against the troops. The best example of this was the dissolution of the French Army in Spain against counter-insurgency warfare during 1808. The Maratha Army did not accept the burden of feeding the soldiers directly during wartime. Contractors were assigned pieces of land temporarily. From its revenues they were supposed to supply the army. However this system was clumsy. The Marathas also depended on the banjaras (grain merchants) who not only charged exorbitant prices, but also vanished during campaigns and occasionally sold grain to the enemy forces. As a result the Maratha field armies disintegrated during protracted campaigns. In India the princely armies commandeered supplies, which in turn alienated the peasants. By contrast, Arthur Wellington paid for all his supplies during his campaign against Mysore and the Marathas. This made the peasants pro-British and they brought all the provisions to the Company's force. Moreover the peasants supplied the British with information about the enemy's movements. A contented peasantry made the British rear secure, and an effective supply

³⁷ *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 158, vol. 3, pp.651-52, 904.

system possible. The Company's sepoys fought badly against the Sikhs at Ferozeshah on December 1845 because they were without provisions. But when well-fed before the fight at Aliwal on January 1846, they performed admirably. The British learnt the lesson from this. To prevent losses among the men and animals in the army due to malnutrition, and to raise the fighting spirit of the troops, the military establishment was concerned to ensure the supply of food for the soldiers, and forage for their horses. During famines, or when the army functioned as an Imperial Fire Brigade, local supplies either became too costly or were just not available. The commissariat then came to the soldiers' assistance. Rations were supplied when the troops were deployed in China, as the provisions could not be procured there.³⁸ If local food supplies were available but were costly, then the army paid its personnel extra. Each soldier, according to the army's calculations, spent Rs 3 Anna 8 per month on his diet. But in 1860, when the prices of foodgrains increased, the authorities calculated that each soldier had to spend more than the stipulated amount. The army provided the extra money, as dearness allowance for the diet.³⁹ This kept the British-Indian soldiers well-disciplined and tactically effective. During emergencies, when local food

³⁸ Richard Holmes, 'Battle: The Experience of Modern Combat', in Charles Townshend (ed), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern War* (Oxford, 1997), p. 205; A.G. Macdonell, *Napoleon and his Marshalls* (1934, reprint, London, 1996), pp. 131, 149; Jac Weller, *Wellington in India* (London, 1972), pp. 33-248; M.R. Katak, *The First Anglo-Maratha War, 1774-83: A Military Study of Major Battles* (Bombay, 1993), pp. 228-31; Hugh Cook, *The Sikh Wars: The British Army in Punjab, 1845-1849* (New Delhi, 1975), pp. 69, 82; Colonel W.B. Thomson, Commissary General, to the Secy. of the Govt. of India, Military Department, Fort William, Progs. no. 208; 25 Feb. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no. 50, 10 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

³⁹ Norman, to Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department Calcutta, Progs. no. 36, 6 July 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

supplies collapsed, the more disciplined Indian regiments got preferential treatment from the commissariat, in order to encourage obedience among the other units. In 1861, when due to famine in Rajasthan, the units stationed there failed to acquire local supplies at normal rates, the commissariat issued a special allowance first to the Mharwara Battalion as it had remained loyal during 1857.⁴⁰

In general, the soldiers were provided some money known as a hutting allowance, for constructing their lines when they were shifted from one place to another. But gradually the army constructed barracks (lines) for the soldiers.⁴¹ Their Home Army in Britain, which started building barracks from the 17th century, probably influenced the British in India. The argument was that billeting the soldiers in the civilians' houses harmed group cohesion as the regiments had to be broken into small groups. This also made it difficult for the authorities to monitor the soldiers. The European armies believed that an essential military conditioning factor was the barrack, which separated the soldiers from the civilian world. The colonial army provided housing facilities to the soldiers because the military elites believed that, if they were lodged with the civilians, then the troops' discipline would collapse. The army felt that if the troops were exposed to the 'seditious' influence of the civilians' then their loyalty would undergo a severe strain. So the soldiers' lines were

⁴⁰ Colonel G.S.T. Lawrence, Agent for the Rajputana States, to the Undersecretary, to the India Govt., Foreign Department, Progs. no. 315, 29 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁴¹ Hannynghton, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Becher, to the Secy. of the Govt. of India, Military Department, Calcutta, Major F.D. Atkinson, to the offg. Controller of Military Finance, Fort William, Progs. nos. 390, 720, 722, 25 Jan. 1861, 21 March 1861, 28 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

constructed and repaired at the state's expense.⁴² Again, to set an example, loyal and disciplined units were always allowed the first claim on hutting money.⁴³

From its retired personnel, the army created a landed gentry to police the countryside. In the British conceptual framework, the landed gentry was respected in India. It was the imperial belief that land grants increased the prestige of the ex-soldiers, and indirectly that of the army, in the rural society. The army provided land either to the individual soldiers, or created military colonies. Such measures also benefited the soldiers' families and encouraged them either to remain loyal or serve in the army. Subadar Major Sangbir Thapa of the 2nd Gurkhas got a piece of land in 1868 for his loyal service throughout his long tenure.⁴⁴ For old soldiers, the army set up colonies separated from the society. The military colonies were the continuation of the Invalid Thanahs, which the Bengal Army established in the early 19th century. It was easier for the army to keep watch over the retired soldiers concentrated in the colonies than if they were scattered throughout the countryside. Their sons grew up in such colonies and were potential reservoirs of recruits. The government took 3000 acres of land from the zamindars in Dehradun for a military colony to settle the Gurkhas who had aided the British in reconquering Delhi from

⁴² Tallett, *War and Society*, pp. 141-2; John Childs, 'The Restoration Army, 1660-1702', in Chandler et. al., *History of the British Army*, p. 62; *Army Regulations*, p.81; Memorandum by Norman on the distribution of the native armies of India, para 10, 26 Sept. 1872, Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, Localization of regiments, para 11, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

⁴³ Hannington, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. no. 392, 25 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁴⁴ Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, p.99.

the rebels in 1857. The retired Gurkhas cultivated the land and paid the lowest possible tax.⁴⁵ For the imperialists', soldiers were more vital than the Raj's local collaborators-the zamindars. While constructing the colonies, the army deliberately encouraged zamindar-soldier rivalry to prevent any bonhomie between the 'natural leaders' of the Indian society and the Raj's sword arm. The army wanted the retired soldiers to check the zamindars' power.

For retaining the orders and the medals, the soldiers had to behave well, as they were liable to lose these privileges for misconduct, or if they had to appear before the courts martial.⁴⁶ Besides gallantry, good behaviour on part of the soldiers was also necessary for promotions. One Mohammed Afzul, a trooper of the 1st Punjab Cavalry, on 23 October 1857 attacked the rebels in Kanauj. But due to his previous record of bad conduct, he was not promoted to a non-commissioned officer. However, Ranjit Singh, a private who was wounded in action was promoted to a Naik, as his previous service record was satisfactory.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (New Delhi, 1995), pp.95-139; Extract from the proceedings of the Governor General in the Home Department, camp Kylwara, Atkinson, to the Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. nos. 618-19, 4 Jan. 1861, 15 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁴⁶ *Army Regulations*, pp.68-70.

⁴⁷ Anon, *History of the 1st Punjab Cavalry* (Lahore, 1887), p.40; To the officers commanding divisions, districts and brigades, circular by Johnson, Adjutant General's office, Lucknow, circular no. 568, 27 Jan. 1863, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 3; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no.77, 24 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

The British strategy was to co-opt Indian officers by offering them greater quantities of tangible and non-tangible rewards, so as to separate them from the privates, in order to cause divisions of interest among the Indian soldiers. The imperial hope was that the privileged group- the officers- would crave extra rewards for themselves. So self-interest would dominate over the collective interest. Hence a struggle for power, prestige and privilege would emerge among the Indian soldiers and they could not operate as a monolith against the British officer corps.

Indian officers got more facilities than the privates. In return, they were responsible for the behaviour of their troops. The excuse that they had no knowledge about the privates was no more accepted after 1857. Resaldar Majors and Subedar Majors became the confidential advisors of the British commandants about the state of the Indian privates, and aided the British officers in disciplining the troops.⁴⁸

During 1857, the Bengal Army rebelled and the Punjab Irregular Cavalry aided in its suppression. So the British increased the latter's pay after 1859. The British assumption was that the influence of the Indian officers over the privates was directly proportional to the former's seniority. So the higher the rank, the greater was the quantum of increase in the pay packet. While Resaldars' salaries were doubled, the Dufadar and Kote Dufadars' salaries increased by Rs 10 and Rs 7 respectively, and the sowars' pay was raised only by Rs 5.⁴⁹ In the barracks there were special quarters for the Indian officers, for extra comfort

⁴⁸ *Army Regulations*, p.104; *Supplementary report*, p.37.

⁴⁹ *Supplementary report*, pp.16-18.

and privacy for them.⁵⁰ The higher the rank, the greater was the hutting allowance. In the 1860s, a Subadar got Rs 30, a Jemadar Rs 15, a Havildar Rs 10 and a private only Rs 3.⁵¹ The Orders of British India were granted only to the Indian officers for long, honourable and faithful service. Those who got these awards received the honorary titles of 'Sirdar Bahadur' and 'Bahadur' and after retirement got the honorary rank of Lieutenant or Captain. In addition to their salaries or pensions they got Rs 30-60 per month. Every year, about 100 officers were given such awards.⁵² Though the Indian Order of Merit was given to both the Indian officers and the privates, the lion's share went to the commissioned ranks. In the history of the 1st Punjab Cavalry about 23 persons got this order, 16 of whom were officers.⁵³ We may take this unit as representative of the Indian cavalry regiments.

III

Welfare Measures, Military Effectiveness and Financial Interests of the Army

Some welfare measures aided the military and financial interests of the army, while other measures harmed the security and monetary dimensions of the colonial war machine. Non-military jobs awarded to soldiers were financially helpful to the state, because this technique

⁵⁰ Note on the garrison and fortress of Agra, Native troops, Calcutta, 31 Dec. 1873, Norman minutes.

⁵¹ Hannington, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. no. 392, 25 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁵² Wilson, *Madras Cavalry*, p.66.

⁵³ *1st Punjab Cavalry*, Appendix II-III, pp. IV-V.

enabled the army head quarter, to honour loyal and brave officers for whom vacancies did not exist in the army. It was also cheaper for the government to man the P.W.D. with Indian officers. In addition, the Indian officers were more efficient as, unlike the European Sergeants, they did not get drunk.⁵⁴

The gratuity scheme raised the army's budget as it had to pay a huge sum to the soldiers all of a sudden. But at the same time, this measure raised the army's combat potential. Gratuities enabled the army to get rid of aged personnel, who were militarily less effective compared with the young robust personnel capable of arduous campaigning. There were many units which possessed soldiers with more than 2 decades of service. One such unit was the Nagpur Irregular Force. To get rid of 143 aged men, the army had to spend Rs 22,195. Those privates with 26 years of service were given Rs 160 each.⁵⁵ Those soldiers who were unfit for soldiering but had not yet reached the age (20 years of service) necessary for getting pensions were encouraged to take discharge by offering them gratuities. For them, in 1870, the army introduced a policy under which soldiers willing to take discharge after 5 or 10 years of service got gratuities amounting to salaries of 3

⁵⁴ Extract from the proceedings of the President of the Council of India, Fort William, 26 Nov. 1860; From the Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. no. 614, 3 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861, Circular to officers commanding divisions and districts, service soldiers, memos, by Haythorne, Adjutant General's office, Ambala, circular nos. 62/N, 63/N, 27 March 1865, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 5.

⁵⁵ Roll of men of the Nagpur Force transferred to the pension establishment, Progs. no. 388, 28 Aug. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

months and 6 months respectively.⁵⁶ This scheme was geared to create an army of young men, probably in response to the growing Russian threat on the northwest frontier.

Wound pensions for the irregular cavalry horses involved an obligation on the part of the army to replace the dead horses. This expenditure was aimed to raise the combat effectiveness of the irregular troopers. Such troopers were responsible for buying their own horses. When they lost their horses in action, all the troopers, by making collective contributions known as the chunda funds, bought new horses. But when they were engaged in heavy fighting and lost many horses, then the chunda funds were unable to replace all the horses. In the long run this encouraged a tendency among the troopers to shy away from combat, so as to avoid casualties to their horses. So the army intervened and paid monetary compensations to encourage the troopers to fight. When the 4th Sikh Cavalry lost many horses in action against the mutineers of 1857, the army paid each trooper Rs 150.⁵⁷ This measure was a vast improvement on the custom prevalent in the princely militaries, in which the troopers were responsible for their horses. If their mounts died, then the troopers were discharged. This explains the reluctance of the cavalry of the indigenous powers to clash with the Raj's mounted force.⁵⁸

In the 19th century, the evolution of the colonial army's uniforms reflected a trend

⁵⁶ Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 4, Pension system, para 8, 28, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

⁵⁷ *Supplementary report*, p.19; To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, no.77, 24 Feb. 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State; Scinde Horse, Brigadier Park's Report, camp Bairseah, Progs. no. 143, 11 Oct. 1859, M.D.P. March 1860.

⁵⁸ Irvine, *Army of the Indian Moghuls*, pp. 298-99.

towards greater comfort. Occasionally, comfortable uniforms cost the army more, but at the same time they raised the soldier's combat effectiveness. The dress of the Peshawar and the Hazara Mountain Levies was troublesome as their tight trousers were unsuitable for climbing the hills, and the sleeves of the jackets had to be cut near the armpits while loading and unloading the pack animals. So this uniform was replaced by a Khaki blouse and loose trousers which were better adapted to combat in the hills. These uniforms required more cloth. So, for each uniform, the army had to spend Anna 8 more.⁵⁹

The army spent money in making arrangements for supplying food to the units deployed overseas. This was necessary because the units stationed abroad suffered an extraordinary rate of sickness. This was due to the failure of the soldiers to cook their own food properly. The soldiers generally cooked their food in *chulas* (earthen or stone ovens) fired with twigs. This was both fatiguing and time consuming. The army's initial expenditure in making arrangements to feed the soldiers reduced the long-term financial loss, which the military force faced due to the pensions and the gratuities which it had to pay to the soldiers demobilized due to sickness. Moreover, the reduction of the frontline strength reduced the overseas units' combat edge. So the army evolved a long administrative tail for providing food and water to the soldiers who were deployed outside India. Each infantry regiment stationed abroad had 10 coolies, 20 water carriers, 10 sweepers and 1 cook.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ R.H. Davies, Secy. of Punjab Govt. Military Department, to the Secy. of Govt. of India, Progs. no. 285, 17 Dec. 1860, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁶⁰ Major G. Casserly, *Life in an Indian Outpost* (London, n.d.), p.23; Abstract return of the 19th Punjab Infantry Regiment, signed Capt. J. Doran, Commandant, Barackpore, Progs. no. 136, 1 Dec. 1859, M.D.P.

Mark Harrison writes that health care for the soldiers raised the army's cohesion, which in turn raised its military efficiency. The British probably understood this. Betterment of living conditions resulted in much expenditure on the army. The army believed that, by keeping the soldiers healthy, the combat potential of the force was raised. The army was convinced that the ordinary populace was disease-prone. If any epidemic broke out among the civilians (who were considered more vulnerable to such diseases), the soldiers would catch such ailments if lodged with them. So the soldiers were segregated from the civilians by accommodating the former in lines.⁶¹ In the second half of the 19th century, the hutting allowance for each regiment cost the army Rs 3,116.⁶² The British believed that accumulated dirt gave rise to health problems. The only way to check it was by building new lines. Any lines which were more than 40 years old were demolished and new lines were constructed for better hygiene. Again, when diseases like small pox spread, the British medical opinion advised the army to demolish the old lines and construct new ones in their

March 1860, Commissariat department, office of the Controller of Military Finance, signed Lieutenant Colonel T. McGown, Controller of Military Finance, Fort Saint George, Progs. no. 329, 7 May 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

⁶¹ M. Harrison, 'Medicine and the Management of Modern Warfare', *History of Science*, 30, 106 (1996), pp. 379-410; Proceedings of a committee assembled at Allahabad by the order of Brigadier Fordyce to report upon the cantonment of Allahabad, Progs. no. 14, 10 July 1860, M.D.P. Oct. 1860; Circular by Johnson, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no. 1125, 15 April 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2.

⁶² Hannington, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Memorandum from Capt. H. Hyde, Undersecretary to the Govt. of India, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. nos. 392-93, 25 Jan. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

place.⁶³ When the line of 36th Infantry Regiment became unhealthy after rainfall, the army immediately reconstructed them. In order to check the spread of cholera, the army ordered that there should not be any stagnant pool of water in front of the soldiers' lines. The army did re-roofing and re-thatching of the lines. Beams, doors and windows were also supplied to the soldiers. Strict instructions were given for making the barracks spacious.⁶⁴ The army provided recreational facilities to the soldiers in barracks. Each unit was encouraged to build aesthetic gardens, which provided an atmosphere necessary for a healthy mind. Fresh air, fruits and vegetables, necessary for good health, were available from the gardens. The authorities provided seeds, tools, land and gardeners freely. The 6th Poona division got Rs 400 per year for maintaining such gardens.⁶⁵

There was a direct linkage between sickness and the frontline strength. The Marathas considered hospital arrangements unnecessary. Hence epidemics frequently decimated their forces. During the Second Afghan War (1878-80), the 1st Gurkha Rifles

⁶³ *Army Regulations*, p.81; Lieutenant Colonel C. Davidson, Resident at Hyderabad, to Major General R.J.H. Birch, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Governor General's camp, Mirzapore, Progs. nos. 158, 368, 1 and 14 Feb. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts, brigades, stations and cantonments, circular no. 32/E, 22 Feb. 1865, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 5.

⁶⁴ Note on the garrison and fortress of Agra, Calcutta, 31 Dec. 1873, Norman minutes; Proceedings of a committee assembled by the order of Lieutenant Colonel Pelly commanding at Aurangabad to report upon the lines of the Hyderabad Cavalry, Proceedings of a committee assembled by order of the officer commanding at Aurangabad to examine and report on the infantry lines of the Hyderabad Contingent, Major B.R. Powell, President of committee on lines at Aurangabad to the staff officer at Aurangabad, Progs. no. 371, 5 Dec. and 6 Dec. 1860, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁶⁵ *Army Regulations*, pp.83-84.

suffered more casualties from disease than from the Afghan enemy. So, for pragmatic reasons, the Indian Army always enquired in detail about how many soldiers were ill at one time, and the type of disease(s) they had contracted. The army utilized technology to check the spread of epidemics. The senior military officers used the telegraph for quick exchange of information, to know where epidemics like cholera had broken out, and to implement counter-measures to suppress the disease.⁶⁶ The effectiveness of the army depended not only how quickly it could suppress the spread of diseases, but also on the speed of processing the sick and wounded soldiers and transferring them back to the battle zones. So money was no obstacle when it came to improving the hospital facilities. The *kuccha* hospitals were thatched, and hence vulnerable to fire. Moreover, moisture destroyed the walls. So these hospitals were reconstructed with concrete. The hospital at Aurangabad was situated near the market, from where continuous noise disturbed the patients. Due to faulty construction, neither air nor light entered the hospital. But free circulation of air was necessary for the patients' health, and to reduce the danger of fire. The accommodation facilities were also inadequate. So a new spacious building, 6000 sq. feet in area, was constructed at a new site where there were trees (for giving shade to the sick and for cooking meals).⁶⁷ Hospitals with low roofs were remade. Under the new plans, some

⁶⁶ Sen, *Maratha Army*, p. 134; John Gaylor, *Sons of John Company: The Indian and Pakistan Armies, 1903-1991* (1992, reprint, New Delhi, 1993), pp. 59, 326. Circular by Johnson, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no. 1125, 15 April 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2.

⁶⁷ Proceedings of a committee assembled at Aurangabad under instruction received from the Quarter Master General for the purpose of fixing the site of the lines of Aurangabad station, Progs. no. 370, 24 Dec. 1860, M.D.P. March 1861.

cavalry hospitals had tiled rooms.⁶⁸ Bad sanitation claimed many soldiers' lives. So the army supplied bedding and blankets in the hospitals. In the cold, damp regions, socks and flannels were also issued to the soldiers. And the authorities regularly enquired about the sanitary state and conditions of the latrines, and took steps to improve them. The hospitals had improved in the post Mutiny era because the pre 1857 hospitals lacked a water supply and proper drainage.⁶⁹

In case the army was unable to provide health care, it financially compensated those who had suffered. The army hoped that this would strengthen the conviction among the soldiers that the military bureaucracy cared for them, a conviction which in turn would tighten their bonds of loyalty to the army. The army supplied a doctor when a regiment marched from one place to another place. A soldier, Bani Ram, became blind due to ophthalmia. He contracted it in 1860, when his regiment was marching from Gonah towards Jhansi, and there was no doctor in his unit. The commandant was ordered to explain why no doctor was accompanying the unit as per the rules. The soldier had to be demobilized, but since he had served for only 2 years, he was ineligible for pension. As a special case, on humanitarian ground, he was paid Rs 66.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Note on the station of Morar and fortress of Gwalior, Accommodation for the troops, Calcutta, 19 Jan. 1874, Norman minutes.

⁶⁹ Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 172; *Army Regulations*, p.83; Memorandum on possible military operations beyond our trans Indus frontier, para 8, Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 36, 43, 45, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

⁷⁰ Major S. Becher, Deputy Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Bacon, to the offg. Deputy Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. nos. 200, 202, 17 Oct. 1860, 9 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

There were some welfare measures which harmed the combat potential and were financially expensive for the army. The life pension scheme involved a long-term expenditure for the army, as it had to pay for retired personnel till their deaths. Despite this, this scheme failed to integrate the soldiers totally with the war machine and reduced the army's combat power. This was because life pension attracted the old soldiers and not the newly enlisted personnel, as the soldiers became eligible for life pensions after a minimum of 20 years of service. The pension rules were framed to reward the old men, who were encouraged to stay in the ranks, though it harmed the efficiency of the force.⁷¹

The army followed several programmes which aimed to create the picture of a benevolent Sarkar among the soldiers but raised the army's expenditure. The army gave pensions to the militarily useless troops even though they were technically not eligible for such rewards. Those soldiers who became physically unfit for military duties after 14 years of service were deliberately retained for another year, even though they were useless from the combat perspective, so that they became eligible for life pensions.⁷²

The pre British Indian militaries followed the notorious practice of going into campaigns with the soldiers' families. This not only reduced such forces' mobility but also created enormous logistical problems. One of the primary reasons for the destruction of the

⁷¹ *Supplementary report*, pp.35-36, 55; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 5, Pension system, para 2, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes; Roll of the 13th Punjab Infantry who appeared before the invaliding committee, Meerut, Progs. no. 103, 20 May 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

⁷² Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 4, Pension system, para 9, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

Maratha Army in the Third Battle of Panipat was because it was followed by an enormous host of non-combatants. The British abolished this practice. Nevertheless, the Indian Army sought to keep the soldiers' spirits high by allowing them furlough (paid leave) to visit their villages. Furlough was introduced in 1796. This measure was necessary as most of the soldiers were married. Except in the Madras Army, (where the wives stayed with the regiments within the regimental lines but were not allowed to follow the units in campaigns), only 15% of the troops were allowed to bring their wives to the cantonments. The rest of the soldiers' wives remained in the villages. To further motivate the soldiers to perform well in battles, those regiments which participated in operations and suffered combat losses were awarded extra furlough. Again, for encouraging overseas service, those units which volunteered for duties abroad, were allowed a furlough of 3.5 months before and after the deployments. The soldiers were generally allowed 3.5 months paid leave each year. If, they contracted illness in the meantime, then the army, to project a benevolent image, extended the furlough period by another 2 to 4 months on humanitarian grounds.⁷³

The army had to pay salaries to the soldiers even when they were on leave. This welfare measure compromised the army's fighting potential. Due to furlough, the corps were 15% weaker between April to November. Units stationed in strategically vulnerable areas like the northwest frontier, where the living conditions were exceptionally harsh, got extra furlough. So such units were always 34% below strength. As the war clouds gathered

⁷³ P.L. Mehra, 'The Panipat Campaign', in Hari Ram Gupta (ed), *Marathas and Panipat* (Chandigarh, 1961), pp. 173-243; *Army Regulations*, pp.43-44; Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, pp.102-03; Barat, *Bengal Native Infantry*, p. 141; Atkinson, to the Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. no. 350, 15 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, para 66, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, one lobby in the army was against allowing so much leave, as furlough reduced the frontline strength. But Major General Birdwood cautioned that furlough was necessary for both economic and physical reasons and for smooth recruitment. Most of the soldiers were from the agricultural families. So, during harvests, when extra hands were necessary in their farms, they demanded furlough. If they were not allowed leave, Birdwood warned, then not only would they be alienated, but also in future no small farmers' younger sons (whom the army adored) would join. Again, enough accommodation for all the soldiers' wives did not exist in the lines. So for domestic reasons, soldiers must be allowed to visit their families. Birdwood's view was similar to the report submitted by the Punjab School in 1857. To prevent another mutiny, the British then attempted to learn about the Indians in greater detail. It accelerated information gathering processes in the colonial state. So the Punjab School was ordered to gather information about the soldiers thought-processes. The Punjab School claimed that the soldiers' mentality could be reconstructed from their ballads and proverbs. After analyzing them, it was clear to the members of the Punjab School that the soldiers hated being away from their land and families for a long time.⁷⁴

Another imperial technique for constructing a combat ethos was by collectively honouring the men of the units, by awarding colours to gallant regiments. There was also inculcation of the belief that to lose colours was worse than death. When the colours were worn out, they were replaced at the government's expense. Colours being a ceremonial incentive, motivating the soldiers by supplying colours, was one way of running the army

⁷⁴ *Army Regulations*, p.43; *Supplementary report*, p.30; *Army committee*, vol. 3, p.548; Memorandum on the distribution of the army in Bengal, para 13, camp Muzaffarnagar, 14 March 1863, Norman minutes.

cheaply. But in the late 19th century this welfare technique proved to be an Achilles heel for the forces in the battle zones. Due to rise in firepower, the troops needed to be scattered in the battlefields, instead of being concentrated around the colours which were meant to provide the rallying points. Colours became an obstacle as they attracted enemy firepower.⁷⁵

IV

Army Bureaucracy as Supplier of Welfare Incentives

The army crafted an enormous bureaucratic apparatus for the quick and efficient delivery of rewards. This logistical burden forced administrative expansion of the colonial state. This focus on the colonial army's internal administration is relevant to the historiography of the colonial state. One School argues that the British Indian state's reach was limited.⁷⁶ This minimalist position is challenged by D.M. Peers who points out that the colonial state was authoritarian, as it was backed by powerful armed forces.⁷⁷ I will argue that the British attempt to introduce European-style army administration was the principal force behind the

⁷⁵ *Army Regulations*, p.96; Circular to officers commanding infantry regiments, Adjutant General's office, camp Moodki, circular no. 27/N, 15 March 1864, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 4; Minute on the organization of the army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, Proposals for all regiments to have colours, para 31, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

⁷⁶ Anand A. Yang, *The Limited Raj: Agrarian Relations in Colonial India, Saran District: 1793-1920* (London, 1989).

⁷⁷ Douglas M. Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in India, 1819-1835* (London, 1995).

colonial state's growth. One of the key features of the Western military establishment was the methodical distribution of largesse to the soldiers. This administrative task forced the colonial authorities to collect information about the Indians and to introduce bureaucratic mechanisms which penetrated to the lowest level of the indigenous society.

The army crafted a surveillance scheme for keeping the retired soldiers on the right track. This forced the army to create new administrative posts which extended the reach of the state to all the towns and villages. Pension was distributed through the pension pay masters. India was divided into many administrative circles and for each circle there was such an official. They, along with the district officers (each district had such a military official), monitored the conduct of the retired troops. Their pensions were stopped if they indulged in disloyal activities.⁷⁸

For distributing family pension, the state had to collect information about the private lives of the soldiers-when and whom they married, where their families were stationed, who else constituted the families, the ages of the family members etc. All this resulted in the fusion of public and private domains. The Adjutant General's department was responsible for providing salaries, pensions and gratuities to the soldiers. For investigating the claims of family pensions, and the settle the estates of the dead soldiers, recruiting staff officers were appointed. All these tasks involved an expansion of paperwork. Nominal rolls of the soldiers, maintained both in English and in the vernacular, contained information about the soldiers' careers, their family members' names and the

⁷⁸ Circular by H.W. Norman, Adjutant General, Adjutant General's office, Calcutta, circular no. 2493/A, 25 June 1861, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 1; A.P. Macdonnell, Secy. to the India Govt., Home Department, to the Chief Secy. to the Bengal Govt., Simla, Progs. no. 7056, 8 July 1887, Proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Aug. 1887, Judicial Department, W.B.S.A.

villages in which they resided. When military personnel died, then vernacular notices were sent to their heirs. These contained information about when and where they should present themselves. Occasionally civil administration got fused with the military set-up for aiding in such tasks. The soldiers' relatives applying from Purneah and Darjeeling had to correspond with the collectors of the respective districts for getting in touch with their family members within various regiments scattered in India.⁷⁹

The army's demand for plots forced the expansion of the Raj's rural administrative set up and this process started in the last half of the 18th century. Land was collected through the revenue department. The residents and the district collectors were in charge of acquiring land. Such duties involved lot of paperwork. These officials had to maintain registers containing the names, ranks and ages of the soldiers, and details of land grants. These documents were then sent to the Governor General who passed them on to the Board of Revenue. The grantees were given money by the government for buying agricultural implements. This money was distributed through the collectors. They had to inform the army pay masters every month about what was going on. After their retirement, soldiers got plots from the army, where they constructed their own houses. On the death of the soldiers, the land passed to their heirs who paid 1/10th of the produce to the zamindars and a low rent to the government. If they failed to pay the zamindars and the Sarkar, the plots were taken away and sold to the highest bidder.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 149, 161, 166; Circular by Norman, Adjutant General's office, Calcutta, circular no. 2493/A, 25 June 1861, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 1.

⁸⁰ James Colebrook, *Supplement to the Collection of Regulations* (Calcutta, 1807), Regulations for invalided sepoys, 18 Feb. 1789.

Napoleon's statement that an army marched on its stomach is well known. But the colonial army's top brass was so concerned with supplying liquor to the soldiers that it seemed that the troops marched on liquor also. The Commissary General was in charge of storing and distributing the liquor to the soldiers. Two big depots of liquor were Calcutta and Kanpur. Kanpur was the centre from which liquor was sent to various places of north and northwest India for distribution among the detachments.⁸¹ In the 1860s the army went on a godown building spree for storing liquor. Even then the commissariat godowns for storing liquor proved inadequate. So Rs 2863 was spent on converting the cattle sheds in Kanpur into liquor godowns to prevent loss due to evaporation from the casks. In 1861, for converting an unfinished barrack at Peshawar into a liquor godown, the army spent Rs 10,000. Occasionally, the army was more interested in storing liquor than accommodating the wounded and the sick soldiers. Orders were issued that if storage facilities were not available, then the liquor should be stored at the hospitals even at the cost of the patients. At certain places, like in Dinapore, the army encroached on the civilian hospitals and used them for storing liquor.⁸² The Commander-in-Chief was alarmed at the rising rate of liquor consumption among the soldiers. They bought large amounts of alcohol from the bazaars, and got into debt. So, in 1862, canteens were opened which provided the soldiers with

⁸¹ Thompson, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Lieutenant G. Newmarch, Assistant to Chief Engineer, Punjab, to the Military Secy. to the Govt. of Punjab, Lahore Progs. nos. 441, 444, 3 Jan. 1861, 15 Feb. 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁸² H. Andrew, Executive Engineer, Dinapore division, to the Superintending Engineer, Bihar Circle, Newmarch, to Major G. Hutchinson, Military Secy. to Govt. of Punjab, Lahore, Thompson, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Fort William, 12 Jan. 1861, 25 Jan. 1861, 5 Feb. 1861, Progs. nos. 442-43, M.D.P. March 1861.

limited amounts of alcohol.⁸³

The Quarter Master General of the army's task was housing the soldiers and upkeep of their barracks. The soldiers demolished old lines themselves. However, when they constructed new lines, the P.W.D. cooperated with the commanding officers, if the task exceeded the capacity of army's military engineers. Each barrack had deep wells which did not become dry even during summer. Boring apparatuses for the wells were provided by the P.W.D.⁸⁴

Construction and repairing of the latrines, and construction of watering troughs (for watering the horses) was done by the Military Works Service. In each station, the medical officers guided the commanding officers in regard to sanitation. The sanitary officers were responsible for testing the liquor supplied to the soldiers. For the above mentioned tasks, the army needed many doctors even in peacetime. The army wanted Indian doctors, as they were cheap and easily available. The army's demand for medical personnel probably forced the government to establish medical colleges, and this encouraged the growth of the medical profession in India. The army recruited Indian doctors from the medical colleges of

⁸³ Circular by Johnson, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no. 3061, 25 June 1862, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 2.

⁸⁴ *Army Regulations*, p.81; Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts, brigades, stations and cantonments, circular no.32/E, 22 Feb. 1865, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 5; Lieutenant Colonel R. Phayre, Quarter Master General, to the Secy. to the Bombay Govt., Military Department, From the offg. Deputy Quarter Master General, to the Quarter Master General, Davidson to Birch, Balfour and Lieutenant Colonel R.S. Simpson, Military Finance Commissioners, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Progs. nos. 362, 368-69, 411, 9 Jan. 1861, 31 Jan. 1861, 1 Feb. 1861, 6 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

V

Soldiers' Grievances and the Army's Responses

The limits of British policy to construct loyalty through the welfare bureaucracy, become clear from the soldiers' perceptions, which are evident from their petitions. An action-reaction dialectic shaped the interaction between the army personnel and the military bureaucracy. The troops demanded redress if they perceived a qualitative or quantitative decline in the distribution of incentives. The bureaucracy responded favourably. The texture of demands and the army's response were shaped by the theoretical paradigm through which the soldiers viewed the army and vice versa. The troops viewed their relations with the army as partly contractual and partly patriarchal. At times the soldiers bargained because they felt that the army had not fulfilled all the obligations of the contract. Occasionally, the troops demanded more because they conceived that the army, being their guardian, would oblige them.

As the Raj monopolized the military labour market of India, the potential soldiers had no other employers to fall back upon. Being aware of their weak position in the power game, they never challenged the Sarkar directly. So the demands of the soldiers were always clothed as 'humble petitions'.⁸⁶ Being dependent on the army for sustenance, the

⁸⁵ *Army Regulations*, pp. 83, 115; Dr. J. Forsyth, Inspector General, Medical Department, to Birch, Military Department, Fort William, Progs. no.147, M.D.P. March 1861.

⁸⁶ For example: The humble petition of Mir Jafir, late commandant of 2nd Jezailchees and Subadar in Coke's Rifles, to General Robert Napier, Military Department, Fort William, Progs. nos. 449-50, 14 Oct. 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

soldiers conceived the war machine as their 'mother' who breast-fed them and cherished her sons.⁸⁷ They felt that by destroying the army they would get nothing, just as children would derive no benefits by destroying their mother. Hence, to get their dues, they pressured the army, but never aimed to break it. So open mutinies were rare. The realities of the power structure and their intellectual paradigm made them somewhat fatalistic. The soldiers' view as regards service in the army was 'Kabhi Suk Aur Kabhi Dhuk, Angrez Ka Naukar.'⁸⁸

After 1857, the British were neither bent on revenge on all the Indians, nor did they want to stop their recruitment. This was because they understood that, with the limited number of white troops available to them, they had to depend on the Indians whether they liked it or not. For the 1857 catastrophe, the British held responsible their faulty policies and not the soldiers' mentality. The annexation of Awadh and mismanagement by the British officers were regarded as the principal causes of the uprising.⁸⁹ Therefore the imperialists attempted to chalk out policies which suited the Indian soldiers' nature. The Indians were not portrayed as untrustworthy by nature, or as incarnations of evil. The British viewed them neither as machines nor as animals. In imperial eyes, the soldiers were

⁸⁷ Wilson, *Madras Cavalry*, p.71.

⁸⁸ The proverb meant according to the MacMunn 'Sometimes Pleasure Sometimes Pain, The Servant of the English'. MacMunn, *The Armies of India* (1911, reprint, new Delhi, 1991), p.212. An accurate translation would be 'Whether in Pleasure or in Pain, I am the Servant of the English.'

⁸⁹ Field Marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* (London, 1897, reprint, 1898), pp.231-44; MacMunn, *The Armies*, pp.82-105; *Supplementary report*, pp.97.

not automatons, but ordinary men of flesh and blood with feelings, passions and prejudices, who must be treated sympathetically. The British officers were warned that their arrogance and intolerance had caused 1857. Evangelicalism was on the run. The declared policy was that the religious customs and prejudices of the Indians should be respected.⁹⁰

Occasionally the soldiers' demands were shaped by their religious scruples, and the authorities gave in to the soldiers' pressure. In 1860, a Sikh regiment demanded borax and ghee for washing their hair. On religious grounds, they refused to use the marine soap provided by the army. In the end, the army, instead of supplying 2 maunds of marine soap, offered to each regiment 8 maunds of borax and 10 maunds of ghee.⁹¹ When the ordinary Indians were not getting enough rice to eat, the soldiers, aware of their special bargaining power, got costly ghee from the army.

The army could not afford to be tough while discharging soldiers, because it wanted a special collaborative relationship with the Indian populace who manned the Raj's ultimate line of defence. During the demobilization of the 13th Punjab Infantry's personnel at Meerut in 1861, the army decided to provide all the men over 8 years service, gratuities amounting to 12 months' pay. This scheme failed to satisfy them. So, to stifle protests, many were promoted before being discharged. This enabled them to enjoy higher social

⁹⁰ *Supplementary report*, pp.30, 65-66; *Army Regulations*, p.94; To officers commanding districts, divisions and brigades, by Haythorne, Adjutant General's office, Simla, circular no.77/N, 23 July 1864, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 4.

⁹¹ Thompson, to the offg. Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, Fort William, Progs. no. 43, 22 Feb. 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

status, pay and other privileges. The rest were absorbed in the Meerut Police.⁹²

Frequently, the Indian officers protested. As they were politically and militarily more important than the privates, the army could not afford to alienate them. In 1861 the Central Indian Horse was amalgamated with the Meade's Horse as part of the overall military policy to reduce the Indian Army's size in the mutiny's aftermath. The amalgamation of these two units demanded the discharge of 22 Jemadars and 49 Dufadars. To get rid of them, the army offered gratuity amounting to 6 months' pay. They rejected this offer and demanded bigger gratuities along with employment in the mounted police of Punjab. The salary of the cavalry police was higher than that of the irregular cavalry. In addition, the Indian officers demanded promotion. Colonel J. Travers, the officer on the spot, lost his nerve, and urged the government to accept the demands. He warned there would otherwise be gross indiscipline. The storm of 1857 had just subsided and the government decided not to take any risk. The gratuity was increased to 12 month's pay and all the discharges in the Bengal Cavalry were made voluntary.⁹³

All these incidents also unnerved the Secretary of State in the metropole. To prevent any probable outbreaks, Charles Wood decided to play safe by ordering that those Purbiya regiments, which had remained loyal during 1857-59, should be retained. He reminded the army that when the units were raised, the men had had natural expectations of

⁹² Scott, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Calcutta, 10 July 1861, Roll of the 13th Punjab Infantry who appeared before the invaliding committee, Meerut, Progs. no. 103, 20 May 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

⁹³ Extract from the proceedings of the Govt. of India, in the Foreign Department, Progs. no. 538, 15 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861; Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts and regiments of native cavalry, by Haythorne, circular no.82/N, 19 Aug. 1863, Adjutant General's circulars, vol. 3.

permanent employment. So even if the total disbandment of some of the units was necessary to avoid large-scale disturbances, as many personnel as possible should be retained and, the rest should be discharged with bigger gratuities.⁹⁴

The soldiers reacted to the malfunctioning of the welfare bureaucracy. Mir Jafir, the late commandant of the 2nd Jezailchee Corps complained in 1860 to General Robert Napier that about one and half years previously, the government had promised him a pension of Rs 200 per month. However, he was yet to receive any money. Napier sent the petition to Fred Roberts who was looking after the pensioners' claims.⁹⁵

Occasionally the army acted without any direct pressure from below. It assumed that if it did not supply rewards to the soldiers then there would be mutinies. This overreaction on part of the sahibs was probably due to an acute sense of powerlessness. The Indian population ran into millions. White terror was represented by the British soldiers and their supply was limited.⁹⁶ They were conscious of the necessity of not alienating the collaborators needed for manning the coercive machinery. To meet the emergency during 1857, the army raised many temporary local levies and also expanded the size of the existing irregular units. After the crisis was over, the army had no use for units like the Awadh Police Cavalry and the Hodson's Horse. Even though these men, facing discharge,

⁹⁴ To the Governor General from C. Wood, London, nos. 59, 98. 14 Feb. 1860, 8 March 1860, Military despatches of the Secretary of State.

⁹⁵ Mir Jafir, to Napier, Progs. nos.449-50, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

⁹⁶ General George Chesney, *Indian Polity: A View of Administration in India* (1894, reprint, New Delhi, 1976), pp. 206, 208, 211, 216, 223.

did not pose any direct threat, the army lacked the guts to throw them out without any monetary compensation. However, the volume of rewards awarded was linked with the level of loyalty displayed. The army favoured the Punjabis who actively aided in crushing the revolt and discriminated against the men from the Ganga-Yamuna doab who actually engineered the rebellion. Those Indians who joined the British side before November 1858, when imperial victory was still uncertain, were given gratuities amounting to 6 months pay (to those from Punjab) and 3 months pay (to the personnel from the Ganga-Yamuna doab) on being discharged. Again, those who joined the British when the rebel cause was hopeless were given gratuities amounting to 3 months pay (to the Punjabis) and 2 months pay (to the Hindustanis), on being discharged.⁹⁷

Conclusion:

The army supplied a host of incentives to the soldiers to project a benevolent image in order to legitimize its authority over its personnel and to extract sacrifices from them. A disciplinary infrastructure to control the troops was enmeshed with the army's policy of 'caring' for its men. However the army's control over the soldiers was mainly hegemonic rather than coercive. The imperialists aimed to drive a cleavage among the Indian privates and the officers by supplying the latter with a greater amount of rewards. The welfare scheme gave adequate space to the soldiers for protest by petitions. And the soldiers were conscious of the special position they enjoyed vis a vis the civilians in the colonial framework. Due to the presence of an extensive bureaucratic machinery, the army, by its

⁹⁷ From the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Military Department, to the Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. no. 726, 11 March 1861, M.D.P. March 1861.

quick response to the soldiers' demands, was able to contain the latter's grievances. Thus the army was able to keep its loyalty mechanism intact.

The reward structure evolved in halting stages. 1857 represented both continuity and change as far as the evolution of the welfare bureaucracy was concerned. The Mutiny was no break for incentives like military jagirs etc. However in the pre 1857 period, due to Bentinck's policy of reducing expenditure, the state abolished many privileges like batta etc. But after 1857, as a reaction to the rebellion, the state became more generous. Privileges were not only reintroduced but also elaborated and systematized. Further, the imperialists learnt from 1857 and became more sensitive to the Indians' religious sensibilities. Another reason for the implementation of the elaborate welfare network in the second half of 19th century was because the army was anxious that the quantum of welfare measures provided were inadequate for generating loyalty. As the British were not confident of their position, there was much debate within the army about how best to implement the welfare mechanism. The starting point of this programme was 1859: the immediate aftermath of the Mutiny, and it reached its peak just before 1914 due to the imperial attempt to gear up the army in response to the worsening international scenario.

The colonial army provides us a window to see the colonial state's structure. Since the army lacked the requisite administrative machinery for distributing supplies, it cooperated with the Raj's civilian bureaucracy, like the collectors, P.W.D. The multifarious demands of supplying the soldiers and the necessity of watching their activities transformed the night watchman state into an ever expanding bureaucratic state. The colonial state consolidated itself by a balanced synthesis of indigenous elements (like bazaars etc.) and imported Western techniques (like gratuity etc.). Colonialism depended on collaboration,

and military collaboration was most vital. The welfare mechanism, and not merely brute force, prevented rebellions among the indigenous military collaborators. And this sustained colonialism in South Asia. Further, welfare measures directed towards the units stationed outside the subcontinent made it possible for the British to use the Indian Army as an instrument of power projection throughout Asia.

Chapter 5

Construction of Regimental Loyalty

Why do men fight? Military philosophers from the dawn of civilization have tried to answer this question. Sun Tzu, the Chinese military theoretician, writing about 2400 years ago and viewing history ‘from above’, gave credit to the initiative of the leaders who drove the soldiers towards victory.¹ Xenophon (430-350 BC), the Greek military intellectual, harped on the mercenary aspects of the soldiers’ service. But he acknowledged that tangible incentives were by themselves inadequate for propelling men forward. He hinted at an *esprit de corps*, an abstract identity, which bound men who were from different communities, but who had fought together over a long period.² The great Clausewitz focused on raising the combatants’ passions and emotions in order to kill the enemy.³ But pugnacity had to be properly directed. For this, an organizational machinery was necessary. Early modern Europe had such an organizational format in the shape of regiments, which were lineal descendants of the Roman legions. The legions, as a framework for structuring armies, survived in the Byzantine empire and re-emerged in Europe with the Nassau brothers’ reforms. The Spanish tercio was the last step in the conversion of the legions into regiments.⁴

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, tr. by Yuan Shihing (Hertfordshire, 1990, reprint, 1993), pp. 91-93, 104, 110.

² J. K. Anderson, *Xenophon* (London, 1974), pp. 75, 121-22.

³ Anatol Rapoport (ed), Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, tr. by J. J. Graham (1908, reprint, London, 1982), pp. 251-56.

⁴ Warren Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army: 284-1081* (Stanford, 1995); Michael Roberts, ‘The Military Revolution, 1560-1660’, and Geoffrey Parker, ‘The “Military Revolution, 1560-1660”-A

Why did the Indian soldiers fight for the British? The officer-soldier relationship, along with the incentive structure constructed by the British, definitely constituted important components of the command structure. But these hardly offer adequate explanations.

Managerial expertise was the chief causative factor in enabling the British to structure a combat effective, loyal army from the subcontinent's manpower. The British success was due to their ability to incorporate the sepoys into a professional combat organization, through the regimental structure. The regiment was one of the chief determinants of the standing armies which were the products of the 'Military Revolution' in the West.⁵ The regimental culture was imported from Europe and replaced the mansabdari structure, which was the basis of the pre colonial forces.

Under the mansabdari system, the chieftains were granted land for maintaining troops. They, and not the princes, were responsible for recruiting and disciplining the soldiers. This resulted in divided loyalty and frequent desertions.⁶ But the British were able to construct impersonal cohesive loyalty bonds with the help of the European regimental mechanism. However, the colonial scenario modified the process of regimental construction in ways, which can be traced back to the pre 1857 era.

Myth', in Clifford J. Rogers (ed), *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (Colorado and Boulder, 1995), pp. 13-35, 37-54.

⁵ For the view that there was Military Evolution and no Revolution see Jeremy Black, 'A Military Revolution? A 1660-1792 Perspective', in Rogers (ed), *Military Revolution Debate*, pp. 95-114.

⁶ William Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moguls: Its Organization and Administration* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1994), pp. 3-61.

Along with unit pride, Omer Bartov emphasizes the role of ideology in motivating men during war.⁷ The post Mughal polities exploited the religious fervour of the mercenary bands like the Nagas who were deployed as shock troops.⁸ However, the Company dissuaded from utilizing the military honour of such *Sanyasi* warriors. Since the British could not utilize nationalism in the construction of regimental pride for their Indian armed personnel, they tried to motivate the sepoys of the Bengal Army before 1857 by pandering to caste. The British officers paid deference to the rituals for fostering caste pride among the two high castes-the Brahmins and the Rajputs. To please these upper castes, the low castes were not enlisted. By 1852, 70% of the Bengal Army's personnel were Purbiyas-the high castes of north India. As each regiment was composed of these two castes, drawn from more or less the same district, and constituting a brotherhood, it became impossible to instill discipline. The caste experiment collapsed with the Purbiya rebellion in 1857. The British then aimed to generate regimental ethos by constructing racial identities for the various groups who were dubbed 'martial' in late 19th century.⁹ *Esprit de race* became the secret of creating battlefield morale.

⁷ Omer Bartov, 'Indoctrination and Motivation in the *Wehrmacht*: The Importance of the Unquantifiable', *JSS*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1986), 16-34; idem., 'Daily Life and Motivation in War: The *Wehrmacht* in the Soviet Union', *JSS*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1989), 200-14.

⁸ Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire, 1771-1788*, vol. 3 (1938, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), pp. 15, 189.

⁹ Captain A. H. Bingley, *Handbook on Rajputs* (1899, reprint, New Delhi, 1986), pp. 20-24; *Hancock report*, pp. 27, 32.

This chapter attempts to chart the trajectory of the regiments' evolution in the aftermath of the 1857 Mutiny. The process of regimental construction involved two aspects. Different 'warrior' communities were constructed from the diverse groups which entered the Indian Army, and their community ethos was then amalgamated with the units' ethos. In the 19th century, the British empire invented several 'martial' communities like the Scottish Highlanders and the Nigerian warriors by redefining cultural and tribal relations.¹⁰ Construction of the warrior communities in India is part of the same process. But the different contexts involved region specific modulations.

I

Construction of Group Identities

The British constructed several 'martial' communities from the subcontinent's manpower and their group consciousness probably sustained them. The imperial belief was that the various agglomerations of people could be typologized under different racial communities on the basis of their biological origin, as well as on the basis of their varying social and cultural mores. For Major A.H. Bingley, the Jats and the Sikhs, despite their similar biological origin, constituted different races because of their different religions. So the British concept of racial community was a mixture of artificial policy inputs and primordial attachments.¹¹

¹⁰ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland', and Terence Ranger, 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa', in Eric Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983, reprint, 1985), pp. 16, 19-23, 211, 224.

¹¹ The imperial concept of a racial community was similar to Cynthia H. Enloe's concept of an ethnic group. Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers: State Security in Divided Societies* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1980), pp. x, 1-2; Major A. H. Bingley, *Handbook for the Indian Army: Sikhs* (1899, reprint, Chandigarh, 1970), pp. 2, 18, 50, 54.

This section focuses on the British policy of shaping the identities of the Gurkhas, the Rajputs and the Sikhs, as the share of these groups in the post 1859 army was considerable. Between 1885 and 1912, the percentage of these communities increased. For the Gurkhas, the increase was from 5% to 11.5%; for the Rajputs, from 6.7% to 7.7%; and for the Sikhs, from 13.5% to 22.5%. In absolute numbers, the increase was greatest for the Sikhs. From 17,774 their number rose to 32,702 men, while the Rajputs rose from 8291 to 12,051, and the Gurkhas from 6684 to 18,100. The size of the Indian Army at that period fluctuated between 130,000 and 158,000 men.¹²

Certain historical factors were conducive for manufacturing a separate identity for the recruits from Nepal. There was much tension between the tribes of Nepal and the Hindus of north India. The Nepalis looked down upon the Hindus of the Gangetic plains (Hindustanis) because, the Muslims had conquered the Hindustanis but never the Nepalis. The Nepalis, being mostly of Mongolian stock, were physically different from the north Indians. There were also linguistic differences between these two groups. All these distinctions were further exacerbated by the difference in the religious practice of those Nepalis who had accepted Hinduism. The Thakurs among the Nepalis did not accept the sacred thread (*janeu*), which was the primary symbol of Hinduism in the plains. Nor did the Thakurs accept the strict food habits of the high caste Hindustanis. Since the Nepali Hindus rejected many of the caste principles of the orthodox Hindus, the north Indian Hindus conceived the former as 'unconverted

¹² *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 156.

barbarians' and called them *Pahariyas*. This was an abusive term meaning outcaste highlanders. In return, the Nepalis termed the Hindustanis *Madhesias* (inferior plainsmen).¹³ All these distinctions not only created a distinct sense of identity among the recruits from Nepal, but also fitted into the imperial game of 'divide and rule'.

The imperial belief was that the physiognomy of the Nepali tribes was distinct from that of the Hindustanis. For the British, this was one of the principal reasons for ascribing a separate identity to the Nepalis. The imperial ethnographers claimed that the aboriginal tribes of Nepal were of Mongolian-Tibetan stock. The characteristic physical features of the Nepalis, in the British conceptualization of them, were a broad head and face, a large and salient mouth, the eyes wide apart and set obliquely in the face, the nose pyramidal and its base depressed, a lack of facial and body hair, and the stature low but muscular and strong.¹⁴

The British took the term Gurkha from a district in the northeast of the Gandak basin in Nepal. The Magars, Gurungs, Khas and the Thakur tribes inhabited this locality. A dynasty called Gorkha ruled over the region from the 18th century. For several reasons, the British mainly used the inhabitants of the Gorkha district to forge the Gurkha community. Under the Gurkha dynasty, the people of this region conquered Nepal in the late 18th century. The Raj's officials believed that martial prowess was hereditary.¹⁵ The Khas, the Magars and the Gurungs constituted the Gorkha Army. By enlisting these tribes, the Raj wanted to utilize an existing military

¹³ Captain Eden Vansittart, *Handbooks for the Indian Army: The Gurkhas* (1906, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), pp. 8, 10-11, 65, 71.

¹⁴ Eden Vansittart, *Notes on Nepal* (1896, reprint, New Delhi, 1992), pp. 56-7, 84.

¹⁵ Lionel Caplan, 'Martial Gurkhas: The Persistence of a British Military Discourse on "Race"', in Peter Robb (ed), *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1995), p. 261.

tradition to build a warrior community. In the local society of the Khas, military service was regarded as honourable. Those Khas who ran away from battle became outcastes in their own society and their wives refused to accept them. However the British favoured the Magars and the Gurungs, who constituted the rank and file of the Gorkha force, more than the Khas. This was because the latter dominated the officer corps of the Nepali Army and the Raj could not offer higher officer ranks to the South Asians. The British also probably conceived the Khas as too skilled, and hence too dangerous, to be inducted into the colonial army in large numbers. Other clans like the Limbus and the Rais, though they were not inhabitants of the Gurkha district, were given the Gurkha identity. Limbus were recruited by the British because, being hunters, they were skilled marksmen. Their familiarity with hilly jungles made them excellent light infantry skirmishers who could be used for high altitude warfare both in northeast and northwest India.¹⁶

The British never included any tribes from west Nepal, as enlisting them would run counter to the programme of establishing a Gurkha identity distinct from the Hindustanis. This was because the customs and traditions of the Hindustanis were very similar to the tribes of west Nepal, on account of the continuous immigration of the Brahmins and the Rajputs into that region from 12th century onwards.¹⁷

What were the techniques which the British used to convert the 6 tribes into a homogeneous Gurkha community? The British had to be cautious, because Kathmandu also simultaneously constructed the Nepali Army from the same tribes. The Nepali sardars eagerly followed the British practice of drilling the recruits, so as

¹⁶ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 24-35, 48, 60, 71, 118; Colonel W. G. Hamilton, 'Ochterlony's Campaign in the Simla Hills', *JUSII*, no. 187 (1912), 137-56.

¹⁷ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p.10.

to transform them into infantry on the Western model. In 1814, the Nepal Army had 12,000 men organized in regiments. When Nepal fought Tibet in 1864, each of the Nepali regiments deployed 650 men.¹⁸

The British policy of structuring the Gurkha community was geared to preventing an amalgamation of identities between the Nepal Army's soldiers and the Gurkhas of the Indian Army. The Indian Army, unlike the Nepali Army, never went for mono-tribal units but mixed the various tribes to create a supra-tribal identity: the Gurkha community. Kathmandu's military establishment used tribal identities while organizing their regiments. The Bhairanath Regiment of the Nepal Army was composed of the Limbu tribe of eastern Nepal, whereas the Indian Army never had any Limbu regiment. The Limbus and the Rais were mixed together in 1890 within the 1st Battalion of the 10th Gurkha Rifles in an attempt to integrate these two groups within the Gurkha identity. Till 1877, the 6th, 7th and 8th Gurkha Rifles accepted the Limbus and the Rais. But the dominant majority in these units were the Magars and the Gurungs. The Nepali force also had Gurung regiments. The Gurung tribe was divided into Charjat and Solahjat clans. For using clan identities to build up primary group loyalties, the Kali Bahadur Regiment of the Nepal Army enlisted only the Charjat Gurungs. None of the Indian regiments was composed only of the Charjat clan or the Gurung tribe.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 33, 51; To Lieutenant Ball Nroughton in charge of the Gurkha force, from G. Ramsay, Resident of Nepal, no.15, 29 Jan. 1858, Return showing the number of each rank and subsistence allowance drawn by each individual per mensem in the Nepal regiments forming a part of the Saran Field Force, List showing the number of each grade and the subsistence allowance drawn by each individual per mensem in the force under the command of Maharaja Jung Bahadur, signed H. Byers, 17 July 1858, Military letters from Nepal, N.A.I.

¹⁹ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 34, 81, 89, 97, 99, 101-2; John Gaylor, *Sons of John Company: The Indian and Pakistan Armies, 1903-91* (1992, reprint, New Delhi, 1993), pp. 235-40, 244-45.

Much has been written about the Kukri as the traditional weapon of the Gurkhas. But the Nepali soldiers also used Kukris. It was the distinct uniform evolved by the Raj, rather than the Kukri, which played an important role in establishing the distinct Gurkha ethos. In the 1790s, the Nepali military introduced Western dress for their personnel. They wore red jackets with white facings and white cross belts. The elite units wore blue cotton tunics and pyjamas of the same colour. Their head dress was a skull cap, with thick, tightly-rolled coils adorned with brass wires. The Gurkhas wore rifle green shirts, and trousers with Kilmarnock caps. The British introduced Western dress among the Gurkhas slowly and steadily, as its rapid and forcible introduction might have prompted a reaction. When the 2nd Gurkha Rifles was raised between 1815 and 1818 from the prisoners of war of the Anglo-Nepal conflict and the disbanded Nepali soldiers, they preferred their mountaineers' dress, their own shoes and traditional headgear, rather than pugris or European dress.²⁰

The British deliberately gave their Gurkha regiments titles and numerical designations which were different from the Nepali Army units. The latter had Hindu gods' names like 'Ram Dull', 'Gorucknuth' etc. The British numbered their Gurkha regiments from 1 to 10 depending on their year of raising. All these units had subsidiary titles, which bore a connection with the places where the units were originally raised. The 1st Gurkha Rifles was raised at Malaun fortress in 1815. So its subsidiary name was the Malaun Regiment. The 2nd Gurkha Rifles was raised later in the same year at Nahan in Sirmoor. So its subsidiary title was the Sirmoor Rifles.²¹

²⁰ John Pemble, *The Invasion of Nepal: John Company at War* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 26-7; Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 44; Major G. F. MacMunn, *The Armies of India* (1911, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), p. 164, plates 58, 60-61; Colonel L. W. Shakespear, *History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)* vol. 1, (Aldershot, 1912), pp. 1-2, 4.

²¹ Gaylor, *Sons of John Company*, pp. 219, 221, 223; To Colonel H. Rowcroft, commanding Saran Field Force from Ramsay, no. 11, 21 Jan. 1858, Return showing each rank and the subsistence

The 'Gurkha' community, an amalgam of 6 tribes, had no uniform religion. Religion, the British perceived, was an essential aspect of community feeling. The Khas were strict Hindus, while the Magars and the Gurungs were lax in their practice of Hinduism, and the Limbus were Buddhists. The British, in their attempt to encourage homogeneity over this heterogeneous group, encouraged them to practise a single religion-Hinduism. The British decided to Hinduize the Gurkhas instead of encouraging Buddhism, because Nepali society itself was moving towards Hinduism. The Gorkha regime imposed the caste hierarchy on society to strengthen the position of the ruling elites (the Brahmans and the Chetris) over the tribes. The distinction between the high castes like Thakurs and the low castes became very rigid, and the Brahmins enjoyed several privileges in Nepali society. The penal code was based on Hindu scriptures. In Nepal cow killing was punishable by death.²² Seema Alavi writes that Prithvi Narayan, the Gorkha king who conquered Nepal, used the Hinduism of north India to provide Kshatriya identity to his tribal soldiers.²³ Hence the British created 'Hill Hinduism' for the Gurkhas to give them a separate ethos from the Hindus of north India and the soldiers of Nepal.

What were the imperial policy directives for producing this new form of Hinduism? The Raj invented Gurkha Hinduism for the Gurkhas by negating certain

allowance drawn by each individual per mensem in the Gorucknath and Burruck regiments, Abstract of sum paid in advance to the Gurkha force under the command of Bukht Jung and Khurg Bahadur from 12 Jan. 1858 to 11 Feb. 1858, Byers, Nepal Residency, 27 July 1858, Military letters from Nepal.

²² Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 52, 65, 77; Kumar Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests: The Process and Consequences of the Unification of Nepal with particular references to Eastern Nepal* (Calcutta, 1991), pp. 155, 160-63.

²³ Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 6-7, 264-90.

caste rules, which hampered the army's operational capacity, and by appropriating certain tribal customs. Occasionally, the British modified the Nepali tribes' religious customs to suit their project of popularizing Hinduism among them. Under pressure from the British, officers of the Gurungs in the regiments called the Brahmins, instead of the Lamas, while performing any religious festivals. When the Gurungs of the regiments got married under British patronage, the Brahmins were called to preside over the marriage ceremonies.²⁴ This was a case of the imperialists interfering in the personal lives of their armed personnel.

If the religious superstition of the Gurkhas fell within the ambit of Hinduism, then the army went out of its way, by bending its service rules, to back such customs. The Nepali Hindus worshipped Hindu deities like Deorali and Devi, and this trend was encouraged. Epidemics were believed to be angry visitations by these goddesses. When in March 1899, a Gurkha woman died due to cholera in the Gurkha recruiting depot at Gorakhpur, all the Gurkha soldiers contributed to a fund from which goats and fowls were purchased and then sacrificed to please the deities. To please the soldiers, even the British officers contributed financially, and then themselves joined in the sacrifice.²⁵ Imperial participation in indigenous customs was part of the British programme of constructing a special identity for their favoured 'martial' group.

The regimental officers were ordered that Hindu festivals like Dussehra should be organized in the camp, or in the field if the unit was on the march. All the personnel contributed to the purchase of animals. The festival was transformed by the army into a symbolic spectacular event, which was incorporated into the collective memory. Spectators were invited to see how quickly the Gurkhas could sever the

²⁴ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 49, 51.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

heads of the sacrificial buffaloes. In addition to the aim of encouraging Hinduism, the British emphasized such ceremonies probably because they believed that such 'martial' rituals would activate the warrior instinct among the soldiers. Before the introduction of Shamanistic Buddhism from Tibet and Hinduism from north India, the tribes of Nepal were animal worshippers. Sacrificing buffaloes was an essential feature of their religion. The British, in evolving Gurkha Hinduism, absorbed this strand.²⁶

The army not only absorbed elements of traditional religion but also added new elements to suit imperial demands. The Durga pujas (a certain set of rituals for worshipping the Hindu goddess) performed in the Gurkha units were distinct from those followed in India. In the army's Durga pujas, the Brahmins sowed barley at the place of worship, rather than having clay images of Goddess Durga made, as in Bengal. To ensure the split between the Nepali Hindus of the Gurkha regiments and the north Indian Hindus, the army invented a distinct tradition of Durga puja. Temples and idols were uncommon in Nepal. But, so as to build a religious tradition separate from the Hinduism of Nepal, every Gurkha regiment had a shrine of the goddess Deorali, which the whole battalion visited during Dussehra. The army used religion to raise the troops' morale. During the Durga puja, the Gurkhas asked for protection for themselves, and blessings, for their weapons and regimental colours, from the warrior goddess Durga.²⁷

For the north Indian Hindus, unlike for the Gurkhas, caste rituals were vital. But they had adverse effect in military matters. The high castes took many baths and

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 55, 129-30.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 55-6, 119.

their elaborate rituals meant that 4 hours a day were required for cooking. H.G.W. Smith declared in 1859 that, if the Purbiyas were cooking, and an order for duty came, they threw away their victuals and would not cook again that day. He asserted that such caste taboos reduced the army's fighting power. During the First Sikh War (1845-46) his 3 Purbiya regiments lost their baggage, which contained their cooking pots and their vessels for drinking water. Though provisions were readily available and they were hungry, they refused to cook using others' utensils. Hungry soldiers fought badly and this probably explains the Purbiyas' indifferent performance against the Khalsa Army. Viscount Melville claimed that, when ordered to dig trenches, the Purbiyas protested saying that they were not coolies. Such menial tasks would have undermined their caste pride.²⁸

The British-tailored Gurkha Hinduism encouraged its followers to throw to the winds the upper caste north Indian Hindus' concept of ritual purity. This, besides giving the Raj's Nepali mercenaries a distinct tradition, also aided British military deployments. The Gurkhas joked at the Purbiyas' custom of taking a bath before eating. Unlike the Purbiyas, on active service the Gurkhas finished their meals in half an hour. Also the Gurkhas, unlike the high castes, did not find carrying provisions on their back degrading. Further, the Gurkhas did not consider foreign service polluting. In crossing the Kalapani, they saw only the prospects of glory and spoils.²⁹

The high caste taboo against taking food together created a logistical burden, as the separate castes had to carry their own cooking utensils for preparing their food separately. The Brahmin soldiers ate alone. But eating and drinking in a common

²⁸ Hugh Cook, *The Sikh Wars: The British Army in Punjab, 1845-49* (New Delhi, 1975), pp. 9, 48; *Peel committee*, pp. 8-9, 48.

²⁹ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 57.

mess was necessary to create a sense of oneness, which strengthened group spirit. Socializing together produced intense personal bonding among the soldiers, which in turn strengthened group spirit. Enhanced group spirit was necessary for creating the 'will to fight'. The army, in order to create strong primary bonds among the men, tried to encourage common messing among the Gurkhas. Initially the Gurkhas, like the high castes, ate in small groups varying from 3 to 12 men. The soldiers were encouraged to eat game acquired by hunting together. The various Gurkha clans were unwilling to eat rice commonly. Hence a custom was introduced that allowed rice cooked in clarified butter to be eaten together by all the clans.³⁰

The British encouraged Hinduism among the Rajputs. The practice of Hinduism among many Rajput clans was ambiguous before the British intervened. In order to establish religious homogeneity within the Rajputs, the British suppressed other forms of worship, like serpent worship, which was originally a Scythian practice. The tribal totem of the Bais Rajput clan of Farrukhabad was the cobra. But when they joined the army, serpent worship was disallowed.³¹

The army took pains to provide martial reputations for the various sub-units (clans) which constituted the 'martial' groups, probably in the hope that this would enhance the troops' combat morale. The Bhaduriya Rajput clan of Kanpur provided soldiers. The British constructed their military tradition by claiming that they fought well under the Mughals. The army also tried to ascribe a martial tradition to the community as a whole. The Rajputs were assumed to be pre colonial India's sword

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 56-7; Captain A. H. Bingley and A. Nicholls, *Caste Handbooks for the Indian Army: Brahmins* (Simla, 1897), p. 43; William L. Hauser, 'The Will to Fight', in Sam C. Sarkesian (ed), *Combat Effectiveness: Cohesions, Stress and the Volunteer Military* (Beverly Hills and London, 1980), p. 190.

³¹ Bingley, *Rajputs*, pp. 39, 145, 149.

arm. Occasionally a communal tinge was added as part of the 'divide and rule' policy, to prevent an amalgam of the martial tradition of all the 'martial' groups, which then might take an anti-British colour. The Rajputs were made to believe that, even in the hour of desperation, they fought bravely against the Muslim invaders of north India.³² Between 1885 and 1912, the size of the Muslim contingent in the Indian Army rose from 50,000 to 55,000.³³ The Raj was apprehensive about the large number of Muslims in the force, and about their loyalty.³⁴ So there was no pure Muslim regiment recruited into the army. And any Rajput-Muslim tension favoured the British.

The territorial identification of the Rajput clans settled along the Ganga-Yamuna rivers with Hindustan, and those Rajput clans west of the river Chambal with Rajputana, enabled the British to divide the Rajput community, despite all of them being Hindus, into eastern Rajputs (north Indian Rajputs) and western Rajputs (Rajasthani Rajputs). This was similar to the 19th century Chinese government's plan of dividing the Muslims into various groups according to their territorial locations. Social and cultural factors further helped the British to create divisions within the Rajput community. The western Rajputs had fewer caste prejudices as regards eating and drinking. In the second half of the 19th century, the British favoured the western Rajputs against the eastern Rajputs for several reasons. The former group enjoyed a higher status in India. So the British, like the Mughals, tried to harness the greater

³² Ibid., pp. 7, 9, 50-51.

³³ *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 156.

³⁴ The Muslims were considered as 'fanatic' and 'treacherous' by the Martial Race lobby, which was ruling Indian Army from the 1880s. Kaushik Roy, 'Recruitment Doctrines of the Colonial Indian Army: 1859-1913', *IESHR*, vol. 34, no. 3 (1997), p. 351.

Rajput tradition by attempting to enlist the Rajputana Rajputs. Further, the disloyalty of a big chunk of the north Indian Rajputs during 1857 pushed the British towards the western Rajputs. But the shift was not total, as clans of Hindustani Rajputs, like the Pundirs of Saharanpur who remained loyal during 1857, were enlisted.³⁵

The British also encouraged distinct war cries for different groups. Besides creating separate traditions, the battle cries gave the soldiers martial ardour in the high risk encounter zones. The Sikhs shouted *Fateh* or *Wa Guru* and the Punjabi Muslims cried *Allah, Allah*. Unlike these communities' war cries, the Gurkha and the Pathan battle cries were secular. Instead of drawing inspiration from the religious faith, the Gurkha war cry emphasized on 'Gurkha' greatness. The Gurkhas shouted *Maro Sangin, Gorkhali Ki Jai*. The Pathan battle cry was *Bal, Bal, Bal*.³⁶

However imperial inputs did not completely shape the identity of the communities like the Gurkhas.³⁷ Local tradition also modulated the imperial sponsored identity formation process. Occasionally the imperial attempt to include newer groups in a community suffered checks due to the customs of the traditional society. The British attempt to include the Damais and the Sarkis in the Gurkha brotherhood faltered due to opposition from the Magars and the Gurungs. They

³⁵ Bingley, *Rajputs*, p. 44, Appendix B; Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 71-74; Lanny Bruce Fields, 'Ethnicity in Tso Tsung- Tang's Armies: The Campaign in North West China, 1867-1880', in Cynthia H. Enloe and DeWitt C. Ellinwood (eds), *Ethnicity and the Military in Asia* (New Brunswick and London, 1981), pp. 54-55.

³⁶ Nirad C. Chaudhuri, 'The Martial Races of India', *Modern Review*, vol. XLIX, no. 1 (1931), p. 79; Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, p. 23.

³⁷ R. G. Fox in *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (New Delhi, 1990) argues that the Sikh identity was totally an imperial construct.

considered the first 2 groups as 'menial' classes. So the Damais were enlisted as buglers and the Sarkis as armourers, and not as soldiers in the Gurkha regiments.³⁸

In order to construct a martial culture, the British could not enlist low status clans. Civilian socialization of the personnel was vital in generating positive group dynamics. Stanford W. Gregory argues that a soldier's fighting qualities depend on how civil society perceives him.³⁹ The Magar tribes had many clans. The Paria clan was never enlisted as they were regarded as outcastes within the Magars. The Rana clan was favoured because a family, which had lost 3 generations of ancestors in warfare, got the title of 'Rana'.⁴⁰

The imperial identity-formation scheme had a massive impact on the indigenous society. The army strengthened Sikhism among the Sikh recruits, not only to give them a separate religious identity, but also because the imperial belief was that Sikhism, being a 'martial' religion, imparted a martial ethos to those Jats who embraced Sikhism. W.L. McGregor, a British officer, represented the pre 1857 army's views. He thought that in general Indian soldiers were mercenaries and deserting the army was not a religious sin for them. But Sikhism, he claimed, demanded that its followers should never renounce their weapons before death.⁴¹

Major G. F. MacMunn voiced the post Mutiny army's view when in 1911 he wrote:

³⁸ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 145.

³⁹ Stanford W. Gregory Jr., 'Towards a Situated Description of Cohesion and Disintegration in the American Army', *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1977), 476-81.

⁴⁰ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 88.

⁴¹ W. L. McGregor, *The History of the Sikhs*, vol. 2 (1846, reprint, Allahabad, 1979), pp. 51, 88-89.

Sikhism is an austere faith, demanding some simplicity and rigour of life from its adherents. So much is this so, that for many years there has been a tendency for young men to avoid the *pahul* and grow up as ordinary Hindus, for whom life has few irksome restrictions. But as the value of the Sikh as the simple, faithful soldier, has lain in his adherence to the simple tenets and hardy life of his forebears, no non baptized Sikh is admitted into a regiment of the Indian Army. So careful are regiments in this matter, and so much are regiments the home of the old martial and simple Sikh principles, that it has been said, not without some shadow of truth, that it is the British officer who has kept Sikhism up to its old standard.⁴²

The British preference for the Jat Sikhs encouraged many Hindu Jats to accept Sikhism. In 1891, there were 250,000 male Sikhs in Patiala. Despite heavy enlistment in the army, their numbers rose to 323,000 in 1900.⁴³ Many Hindu Jats of Hoshiarpur district became Sikhs for enlistment.⁴⁴

Uniforms were another technique to create distinctive identities for different groups. The pugri was designed for the Punjabis by British officers. This headgear became so common that even now the Punjabis identify the pugri as a crucial element of their religious identity. Thus the modern Sikh identity was partly the creation of an alien state.⁴⁵

The imperial attempt to differentiate various communities had certain aspects which the Indians exploited for their own gains. After 1859, the British saw the Brahmins of north India as completely disloyal. So the army did not enlist them, and

⁴² MacMunn, *The Armies*, p. 135.

⁴³ Bingley, *Sikhs*, pp. I, II, VI, 41, 49, 53, Appendix A.

⁴⁴ Captain A.H. Bingley, *History, Caste and Culture of the Jats and Gujars* (1899, reprint, New Delhi, 1976), p. 31.

⁴⁵ Bernard S. Cohn, 'Cloth, Clothes, and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century', in *idem.*, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (New Delhi, 1997), pp. 106-11.

recruited eastern Rajputs instead. The officers differentiated the Rajputs from the Brahmins by means of the sacred threads which they wore around their shoulders. The Rajputs' threads were shorter and had knots. Those Brahmins eager to enter the military service for economic or social reasons bluffed their way into the army by imitating the Rajputs' sacred threads.⁴⁶

II

The Construction of Regimental Traditions: The Cap- Badge Rivalry

Once community consciousness was created, it was fused with the regimental fabric. The Indian Army was a collection of regiments. And each community provided a group of regiments. By 1911, the Gurkhas supplied 10 regiments. Each Gurkha regiment had 2 battalions of 912 men each.⁴⁷ All the Gurkha units possessed a distinct Gurkha identity vis a vis the other groups. Primary group solidarity among the soldiers encouraged them to fight. Primary group cohesion increased among the personnel of a unit if they were made to believe that they were distinct from the society, and from other units of the army.⁴⁸ The Raj tried to generate this feeling among the troops by providing each unit with a separate identity. The imperialists attempted to create, through several organizational techniques, a distinct identity for each unit. The institutional mechanism was also geared to establish traditions both for the class company regiments and the general mixture regiments.

⁴⁶ Bingley, *Rajputs*, pp. 149, 170-71.

⁴⁷ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 145; Gaylor, *Sons of John Company*, pp. 8-9.

⁴⁸ Elliot P. Chodof, 'Ideology and Primary Groups', *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1983), p. 570.

Every regiment was given its own home (depot) to aid in fostering distinct custom. Each Gurkha battalion had a separate depot. The 1st and 2nd battalions of the 2nd Gurkha Rifles had depots at Dharamsala in the Kangra valley of Punjab, and Dehradun.⁴⁹ The regimental depots were situated at the centre of each regiment's recruiting base. The depot of the 14th Madras Infantry Regiment was Bangalore, because this unit enlisted the Tamils and Deccani Muslims from Karnataka, Tanjore, Madras and Mysore.⁵⁰ The recruiting parties went out from the regimental depots and returned there with the newly enlisted men. The recruits were stationed and trained there, before joining the units which were on active service. The reservists of the regiments were trained at each unit's depot. The regimental centre of the 20th Punjabi Infantry Regiment was Lahore. Even though this unit's Pathans were enlisted from the Indus frontier, for fostering unit spirit, they were brought all the way to the depot at Lahore for training. The reservists were then distributed in the various companies according to their communities. For training, the regiments paraded at their depot parade grounds. Senior military commanders inspected the units on parades in the depot parade grounds, and occasionally distributed medals for gallantry. Further, the annual examination of the Indian officers of the regiments, and the musketry instruction classes, were held at each regiment's depot.⁵¹

For building up unit spirit, even non-Western forces like the Burmese used flags and standards. In November 1885, after being driven from the Thitkokkuin village by the British column under Captain F. D. Raikes, the Burmese militia left 3

⁴⁹ Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, p. 180.

⁵⁰ 14th Madras Infantry, N.A.I., pp. 39, 134, 198.

⁵¹ *Army committee*, vol. 3, pp. 901, 903-04; 8th Bombay Infantry, N.A.I. (This manuscript is unpaginated. Information is given under each date.), 28 May 1881, 13 Sept. 1893.

standards behind. Each standard had the picture of a dragon.⁵² For the British, the standard (in the case of the cavalry) or the colours (in the case of infantry) were an essential part of the regiment. In the West, the tradition of using standards to provide regiments with a continuous and coherent identity went back to Rome. Marius provided each regiment with a standard, and the Emperor Julius gave a particular number to each legion, which was inscribed on its standards, to distinguish the legions from each other. In the mid 18th century, Marshal Saxe reintroduced these techniques for creating distinct identities among the different French regiments.⁵³

Following this tradition, the British gave each regiment a standard or colours. In 1788, the Madras Light Cavalry Regiment was first issued with a standard. The British tried to design the regimental flag of the Indian Army units in conformity with the military customs of the metropole. In 1801, Fort Saint George was ordered to transmit to the Adjutant General's office an indent for a set of colours for the respective units, which would be made in imitation of the flag of the United Kingdom. The colours were generally kept in the regimental head quarters, but during battle the colours were carried into actions by special officers-Colour Havildars- to provide moral encouragement to the men. The colours were presented to the units in formal public ceremonies so that the 'great' events were stamped in everybody's mind. The delivery of the colours was observed with the solemnities due to the occasion. Each regiment received its colours under a general salute and then fired guns in celebration

⁵² Diary of Capt. F. D. Raikes, Deputy Commissioner Thayetmoyo with the Movable Column, eastern frontier from 16 to 30 Nov. 1885, no. 830, Proceedings of the Govt. of India, Burma, 1885-1886, N.A.I.

⁵³ General John Hackett, *The Profession of Arms* (London, 1983, reprint, 1984), p. 18.

of the event.⁵⁴ This public spectacle aided in the production of a unit tradition. Occasionally, senior political elites participated in such 'dramas', to provide added grandeur. On 28 October 1899, the commandant of the 44th Merwara Regiment announced to the men that the Viceroy would present the new colours to the unit. The soldiers were made to understand that this was indeed a rare honour for them, as the Viceroy rarely condescended to perform such a duty. On 1 November 1899, the regiment staged a rehearsal of the parade held for the presentation of new colours by the Viceroy. The colours, which functioned as the regimental flag after the presentation on 1 November were, in the Viceroy's words, to be the guarantee of orderly conduct and good discipline of the unit, and the symbol of loyalty and allegiance. He told the men to regard the colours as a gift from the Queen, which must be guarded properly. The regiment as a whole swore loyalty to the colours and assured the Viceroy that the loyalty, which they had displayed for the last 70 years, would continue and that no stain should be allowed on the regiment's reputation.⁵⁵

Different regiments were allowed and encouraged to possess different types of uniforms (facings, laces, pugris, badges, mottos and cuffs) for making each unit a distinct entity. The army assumed that these external markers functioned as symbols of distinction, and so created a separate unit ethos and heightened each unit's prestige. Uniforms which were worn by famous units, asserts John Keegan, instantly turned the recruits of those regiments into battle hardened warriors.⁵⁶ In the post 1859 era, the 1st

⁵⁴ Lieutenant Colonel W. J. Wilson, *Historical Record of the Fourth Prince of Wales Own Regiment Madras Light Cavalry* (Madras, 1877), pp. 6, 33; 8th Bombay Infantry, 25 Nov. 1886.

⁵⁵ 44th Merwara Infantry, N.A.I. (This manuscript is unpaginated and the information is given under the heading of various dates.), 28 Oct. and Nov. 1899.

⁵⁶ John Keegan, 'Inventing Military Traditions', in Chris Wrigley (ed), *Warfare, Diplomacy and Politics: Essays in Honour of A. J. P. Taylor* (London, 1986), p. 69.

Bengal Cavalry had yellow uniforms, black facings, golden lace and badges inscribed with the words 'Bharatpore' and 'Kandahar 1842', commemorating the successful battles in which this unit had participated. The 1st Punjab Cavalry's dress was different. It was dark blue with blue and scarlet coloured pugris. Delhi and Lucknow were inscribed on their badges, to remind the unit's personnel of their loyal behaviour during the stormy days of 1857.⁵⁷

Details of uniforms were a technique, not only to differentiate various regiments, but also to introduce distinctions between the units of different communities. The British drove a wedge between the Gurkhas and the Punjabis, by giving the former the circular pill box type caps known as Kilmarnock forage caps, instead of the pugris worn by the latter group.⁵⁸

The symbolic markers of status were awarded to a loyal and brave unit for establishing its special position within the military hierarchy. Providing elite status to a unit, claims an American sociologist Anne Hoiberg, raised its members' sense of importance and self esteem, which in turn enhanced the military staying power of the regiment. The 2nd Gurkha Regiment was given a special identity, by putting it on a par with an elite white unit, because the Gurkha Regiment had remained loyal during 1857 and fought well with the 60th Rifles against the rebels in Delhi. For its extraordinary comradeship with the 60th Rifles at the Delhi Ridge, the dress of the 2nd Gurkhas was made similar to that of the crack white unit. So all the Gurkha soldiers of that regiment wore the distinctive scarlet facings of the 60th Rifles. In 1858, the 2nd Gurkhas was given the prestigious title of the 'Rifles'. Hitherto only famous British

⁵⁷ Anon, *Manual for Bengal and Punjab Cavalry* (Calcutta, 1893), p. 20.

⁵⁸ Gaylor, *Sons of John Company*, pp.222, 224-25, 328.

Infantry regiments, and no Indian units, had been designated Rifles. Each member of the 2nd Gurkhas was designated a rifleman instead of a sepoy.⁵⁹

In 1891 all the Gurkha regiments were given the prestigious title of Rifles to distinguish them from the other communities' regiments in the Indian Army. Each Gurkha regiment still maintained its own distinct identity, which also kept alive competition among them. The 2nd Gurkha Rifles' 2nd Battalion, unlike other Gurkha battalions, wore white helmets. Every soldier was ordered to wear the regimental badge, to inculcate the feeling that he was a member of a particular family. The Gurkha units' badges had Kukris painted on them, which strengthened the Gurkha community's identity. But the numerals painted between the Kukris varied, as they represented the regimental number of the particular units. For example the 7th Gurkha Regiment's badges had the numeral 7 between the Kukris.⁶⁰

Though the regimental badge was a European concept, the imperialist's accommodated indigenous elements like the Kukris within it. A similar mixture of the Oriental and the Occidental tradition was evident in the case of the evolution of the soldiers' dress. Initially the British tried complete Europeanization of the Indian troops' dress. But the Vellore Mutiny forced them to go slow. In May 1806, the 2nd Battalion of the 4th Madras Infantry Regiment declined to use cockades and stocks of leather. The Indian personnel complained that the leather was made from the skins of hogs and cows. Both the Hindu and the Muslim soldiers considered it as an affront to their religion. After the suppression of the Vellore Mutiny, the Westernization of uniforms slowed down, but did not stop. Till 1812, the personnel of the 14th Madras

⁵⁹ Anne Hoiberg, 'Military Staying Power', in Sarkesian (ed), *Combat Effectiveness*, pp. 238-39; Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, pp. 68-69.

⁶⁰ Gaylor, *Sons of the John Company*, pp. 222, 227-8, 236, 241; Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, p. 166.

Infantry Regiment were allowed to use slippers. They then had to change to boots. Similarly, the 9th Bombay Infantry Regiment's men were asked to wear pantaloons instead of drawers.⁶¹

As a reaction to 1857, the British became more sensitive to the brown soldiers' feelings. By 1864, the leather chin straps were replaced by the pugris. The aim was to create consciousness among the soldiers that the regimental dress was not a totally alien construction. The amalgamation of the Eastern and the Western elements in uniforms was evident in the case of 28th Bombay Infantry Regiment. By 1880, the men wore socks, boots and Khaki coats, along with pugris and pyjamas. The uniforms, while representing regimental uniqueness, also took into account the men's cultural sensibilities and climate. In the hot climate of India, loose pyjamas were more comfortable than tight trousers. Occasionally a contradiction developed between cultural and professional needs. When, in November 1880, the 28th Bombay Infantry Regiment was ordered to serve in Afghanistan, the men were asked to wear tunics, great coats and trousers, though they preferred pyjamas and dhotis. In the case of the 4th Battalion of 9th Jat Regiment, the Eastern traditions dominated over the Western elements in the uniforms. The men used dark blue turbans, kummerbands, serge pyjamas and red serge blouses, but black leather ankle boots. On the one hand, uniforms represented regimental collectiveness because all the personnel of the unit wore more or less similar dress. But symbolic distinctions in the details of the uniform of the same unit reflected hierarchy. The Indian officers of this unit, unlike the

⁶¹ Lieutenant General S. L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty First Century* (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 100-101; V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army, 1600-1974* (Bombay, 1974), p. 57; 14th Madras Infantry, pp. 171-72; 9th Bombay Regiment, N.A.I (This manuscript is unpaginated and the information is given under various dates.), 1769, 1787.

privates, used brown leather gloves and their kummerbands had golden lines within dark blue.⁶²

Regimental identities were also strengthened with the help of inter-unit games like 3 mile cross country races, football tournaments, firing competitions, etc. The officers organized such games even in the British Army. The soldiers participated in them as representatives of particular units and tried their best to keep up their regimental status. All these sports, besides keeping the troops occupied, also kept them physically fit. Sporting competitions to encourage competitive spirit, and hence better performance, were held even in the post 1945 Soviet Army. Rifle shooting competitions in the Indian Army, apart from forging a regimental ethos, also raised the units' combat potential by upgrading the individual marksmanship of the participants, a necessary skill required for fighting in the mountains of the northwest frontier. In the Quetta District Rifle Competition, the participants had to shoot over ranges of 800 yards and 500 yards respectively. The prizes were as follows-Rs 15 (1st prize), Rs 8, 5, 4, 3, 2, and Rs 1 (last prize). In 1890, at the rifle shooting test organized by the Bengal Punjab Rifle Association at Meerut, the 5th prize was won by the soldier from the 2nd Gurkha Regiment.⁶³

⁶² Lieutenant (Adjutant) Carter, 28th Bombay Regiment, N.A.I. (This document is unpaginated and the information is given under various dates.), 27 Sept. 1860, 26 Dec. 1870, 7th Nov. 1880; 4th Battalion, N.A.I. (This manuscript is not paginated and the information is given for various years.), 1911.

⁶³ Ellen Jones, *Red Army and Society: A Sociology of the Soviet Military* (Boston, 1985), p. 129; John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (1976, reprint, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1978), p. 279; Pierce G. Fredericks, *The Sepoy and the Cossack* (London, 1972), pp. 102, 144, 160-63, 212, 217; Shakespear, *Sirmoor Rifles*, pp. 109, 162, 165; 28th Bombay Regiment, Oct. 1904.

Each regiment was composed of 8 to 10 companies, and each company had 80 to 100 men.⁶⁴ The company was both an administrative and a tactical unit. In the 'small' colonial campaigns, not the regiments as a whole, but the various companies had to fight separate scattered actions. Two examples will suffice. In Burma on 17th November 1885, Colonel Simpson and Major Hill, operating under Major General Harry Prendergast, captured the Minhala masonry redoubt with a company of the 12th Madras Infantry Regiment. Another company of the 11th Bengal Infantry Regiment, under Lieutenant Downes, supported this attack. Then, on the night of 26th July 1897, Lieutenant E.W. Costello, with a company of the 24th Punjab Infantry, repulsed a tribal attack on a field hospital in Malakand.⁶⁵

How was cohesion maintained among such small groups in such dispersed actions? The personal heroics of the British officers, which traditional historiography emphasizes,⁶⁶ are an inadequate explanation. The construction of a distinct ethos for each company enabled it to face such scattered firefights.

The creation of a distinct tradition for each company was especially vital in the case of mixed regiments. The 8th Bombay Infantry Regiment was a polyethnic unit. In 1884 it comprised: 17 Indo-Portuguese, 18 Jews, 51 Sikhs, 186 Muslims and 502 Hindus. The personnel were further divided on caste and territorial lines. Among the Hindus, 47 were Brahmins and 27 were from the low castes. Of the middle castes,

⁶⁴ *Army committee*, vol. 3, p. 950.

⁶⁵ Extract from Major General H. Prendergast's diary, para 31-32, no. 635, 17th Nov. 1885, Burma proceedings; Evidence in the case of Lieutenant E.W. Costello, attached to 24th Punjab Infantry recommended for the reward of the Victoria Cross for bravery in presence of the enemy at Malakand on the night of 26th July 1897, no. 668, Proceedings of the govt. of India, Malakand 1897-98, N.A.I.

⁶⁶ One representative is Philip Mason's *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (1974, reprint, DehraDun, 1988), pp. 384-91.

the Marathas dominated, as there were 355 of them. The Muslim community was differentiated both on regional and on cultural lines. There were 93 Deccani Muslims who were Shias from the Bombay region, 8 Hindustani Muslims from north India, 59 Muslims from Punjab, and of them 51 were Rajputs who had converted to Islam. To cap it all, there were 25 Pathans who were Sunnis from the northwest frontier. This polyglot mixture with its religious, linguistic and cultural heterogeneity was organized into 8 companies. The British tried to generate a company ethos by holding annual musketry competitions within the units' various companies in the hope that it would create a competitive spirit among the various sub-units. The annual musketry competition for 1884 was held on 31st March. In that competition, B company came first with 95 points and E company came last with only 81 points.⁶⁷

The British tried to make the regiments a sort of communal enterprise for the soldiers. The dominant imperial view, in the post 1857 era, as propounded by Major General H. Hancock, was that long service allowed the Indian recruits to make army service a lifetime's career. Their regiments in general, and the companies in particular, became their homes, thus enabling them to identify their interest with the unit. But short-service would make their loyalty precarious, as their ties with the units would be temporary.⁶⁸

There was another reason for introducing long term volunteer service for the Indians. The Eden Commission in 1879 voiced the Raj's fear:

It must be remembered that our native army is a mercenary force, serving an alien government....And it would be politically inadvisable to adopt for India short-service system of Europe, whereby the largest possible number of men are passed through the army, returned into the general population, and are kept by periodical training in a state of

⁶⁷ 8th Bombay Infantry, 1st Jan. and 31st March 1884.

⁶⁸ *Hancock report*, p. 30.

military efficiency. There can be no advantage and there might be much risk in scattering hundreds of thousands of trained reservists over the several provinces of India.⁶⁹

Military theorists as well as military commanders agree that the stability of the personnel in the unit gives rise to cohesion. Ardant Du Picq, a French military scholar of late 19th century, wrote that 4 brave men who did not know each other would not dare attack a lion. But 4 less brave men knowing each other well, sure of their reliability and mutual aid, would attack resolutely.⁷⁰ Field Marshal Von Manstein asserted that the mutual acquaintanceship and trust that comes after fighting battles together are important. So men who had fought together should be kept united.⁷¹ Historical case studies also supported these assumptions. The frequent transfer of personnel within the American regiments stationed in Europe during the Second World War resulted in men serving with strangers. The net result was low morale and high desertion rates.⁷²

The British aimed to create a sort of joint enterprise in the regiments by not transferring the long service Indian personnel from one unit to another. The absence of inter-unit transfer was geared to encourage 'buddy feeling' among the members of the regiment. When the privates of the 13th Punjab Infantry were invalided in May 1861, most of them had more than 12 years service behind them. When he retired in

⁶⁹ *Eden commission*, p. 87.

⁷⁰ Lawrence Freedman (ed), *Oxford Readers: War* (Oxford, 1994), p. 144.

⁷¹ Field Marshal Erich Von Manstein, *Lost Victories*, tr. by Anthony G. Powell (1958, reprint, DehraDun, n.d.), pp. 260-61.

⁷² Michael Howard, 'Leadership in the British Army in the Second World War: Some Personal Observations', in G.D. Sheffield (ed), *Leadership and Command: The Anglo-American Military Experience Since 1861* (London, 1997), p. 123.

1895, Subadar Major Rana of the 28th Bombay Infantry Regiment had completed 33 years service in the same unit. Subadar Mussunjie of the 8th Bombay Infantry Regiment was pensioned off in August 1878 after 35 years of service in that unit.⁷³ Numerous other examples could be given. However the British Army used short service recruits from 1871 onwards under the Cardwell system,⁷⁴ because, unlike the Indian Army, it could afford to utilize nationalism.

Under the Cardwell scheme, each battalion was recruited from a particular district for encouraging local connections. G.J. Wolsey, a British commander, believed that territorial connections strengthened *esprit de corps*. In the Indian Army, to take advantage of clan and family feelings and territorial links, each company recruited men of a particular clan from a particular district. Particular clans inhabited particular localities. Men from a community liked to join the companies which had their clans, probably for reasons of familiarity. The imperial assumption was that the troops felt comfortable among their relatives and friends, and such personal ties heightened unit cohesion. In the high risk action zones, the men wanted to be surrounded by others whom they could trust, whom they knew and who came from the same neighbourhood and had same culture and dialect. If some man was unable to get furlough, then others from his company, who belonged to the same clans and villages, conveyed the news back to his family and brought to him in the unit information about his domestic affairs. All this created strong interpersonal bonds among the men, and was a step in the growth of unit spirit. Close personal ties among

⁷³ Roll of men of the 13th Punjab Infantry Regiment, signed Capt. V. Tonochy, commandant, Progs. no. 103, 20 May 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861; 8th Bombay Regiment, 28 Aug. 1878; 28th Bombay regiment, 2nd March 1895.

⁷⁴ V.G. Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse, 1815-1960* (Bungay, Suffolk, 1982), pp. 89-90.

the troops were an essential ingredient for the willingness to enter the battle zones. Sun Tzu II, who lived 100 years after Sun Tzu, had written that victory depended on trust and loyalty among the soldiers.⁷⁵

In the Indian Army, the soldiers' offspring received a free education in the garrison school, and they were designated as recruit boys. Many of them enlisted in their fathers' regiments. The army hoped that this policy would make the serving soldiers more loyal and also that those recruits who had been born and brought up in the regimental lines would be inculcated with the traditions of service and loyalty.⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that the Soviet Army believed that what a child was taught during his formative years had a lasting impact on the beliefs carried into adulthood. So in the Soviet Union the militarization of youth started at an early stage.⁷⁷ The Madrassi units being mostly general mixture regiments (Tamils, Telugus, and the Deccani Muslims were mixed within each company) had weak ethnic loyalties to back up their regimental ethos. Hence in the Madras regiments, the sons and relatives of the soldiers were given special preference when vacancies occurred. From the regimental records of the 14th Madras Infantry Regiment it is clear that the recruit

⁷⁵ Edward Spiers, 'The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1914', in David Chandler and Ian Beckett (eds), *The Oxford illustrated History of the British Army* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 191, 194; Sun Tzu II, *The Lost Art of War*, tr. with a commentary by Thomas Cleary (New York, 1996), p. 44; *Army committee*, vol. 2, pp. 954-55.

⁷⁶ *Army regulations, India*, vol. 2, *Regulations and Orders for the Army* (Calcutta, 1913), pp. 118-19; Minutes on the organization of the army in India, Ch. 1, Bengal Army, British officers, para 2-3, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

⁷⁷ William F. Scott and Harriet Scott, *The Armed Forces of the Soviet Union* (1979, reprint, London, 1984), p. 400.

boys constituted 30% of the unit's manpower.⁷⁸ Why did a regiment not depend totally on the recruit boys? We could hazard a guess that the British were probably afraid that to convert a regiment into a set of family monopolies would result in a narrow base which might prove to be dangerous in the long run.

Not only did the regiments have soldiers' sons, but other relatives from the same locality also served in the same unit. In 1857, the 1st Punjab Cavalry Regiment had 3 Duffadars and 20 troopers who were Ranghars from Hansi and Rohtak districts of Haryana. They were all related to each other. Then there were two brothers Naib Risaldar Firoz Khan and Lance Dufadar Akbar Khan who fought against the rebels.⁷⁹ The 1st Regiment of Beatson's Horse was raised in March 1858. It had about 579 troopers and several had their relations serving in it. Sowar Imam Ali was the son of Risaldar Rustum Ali Khan. Mahmud Khan, a trooper, was the uncle of Naib Risaldar Abdullah Khan. Another Afzal Khan was the father of Naib Risaldar Hakim Khan.⁸⁰ In 1861, the 24th Madras Infantry Regiment had 2 privates named Mahmud Hussain and Moonerpah, who were cousins.⁸¹

The Indian officers in charge of enlistment generally acquired men from their own villages, and frequently enlisted their relatives. A typical example was sepoy Sitaram who was enlisted in 1812 by his uncle, who was a Jemadar. Both were Brahmins, who came from Tilowee village in Awadh, and both served in the same

⁷⁸ Wilson, *Madras Cavalry*, p. 33; 14th Madras Infantry Regiment, pp. 28-40.

⁷⁹ Anon, *History of the 1st Punjab Cavalry* (Lahore, 1887), pp. 27, 30.

⁸⁰ Camp Barseah, signed Captain E.G. Wood, commandant 1st Regiment of Beatson's Horse, Progs. no. 1813, 11 Oct. 1859, M.D.P. March 1860.

⁸¹ Roll of men of 24th Madras Infantry Regiment, Progs. no. 74, 6th May 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

regiment throughout their lives.⁸² It was the army's policy to encourage soldiers on furlough to bring recruits. The aim was to utilize the already existing interpersonal bonds for the construction of group cohesion. So each company became a caucus for a particular clan from a particular locality, and these clans resisted the entry of other clans in their companies. This policy was geared to create a sense of emulation among the various companies of a regiment.⁸³

The imperial belief was that the 'martial' ethos had roots in the Indian society. Further the British belief was that the military clans looked down upon other clans, and if the clans were mixed within the companies, then the *esprit de corps* would disintegrate. The men in the companies were very concerned that only members of their own clan should join them. Many non-Rana Gurung recruits tried to enlist along with the Rana clan of the Gurung tribe. The army, to ensure clan homogeneity in the companies, asked the recruits- what clan they belonged to, from which districts they hailed, and what their family backgrounds were.⁸⁴

⁸² James Lunt (ed), *From Sepoy to Subedar being the Life and Adventures of Sita Ram, a Native Officer of the Bengal Army Written and Related by Himself*, tr. by Lieutenant Colonel Norgate (1970, reprint, London, 1988), pp. 3-6, 13-16.

⁸³ Bingley, *Rajputs*, pp. 174, 176.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177; Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, p. 88.

The regiments became a network of families of particular clans. The 5th Gurkha Rifles recruited mostly members of the Thapa clan of the Magar tribe, and people from the Srisht clan of the Newar tribe. The catchment area of this regiment was Nepal valley in central Nepal. Most of the officers were from the Kala family of the Thapa clan. Many officers of the 8th Gurkha Rifles were from Nagarkoti family of the Srisht clan of the Newars.⁸⁵

The companies of the polyethnic regiments also harnessed the primordial loyalties (clan and family affinities). The 20th Punjabis was a class company regiment. In 1912 it had 8 companies with a total of 912 men. This unit had 2 companies of Jat Sikhs and 2 Dogra companies (the Rajputs and not the Brahmins of this community were enlisted). And the other 4 companies (B, C, F, and G) were composed of trans Indus tribes. Though only 2 companies (the Jat Sikhs from central Punjab) were enlisted from Punjab, the unit as a whole was still given the title of 'Punjabis' to create an artificial territorial identity. As the companies were of distinct groups, they were never mixed, but functioned as separate entities. For small unit actions, the companies were divided into sections. Each section had a minimum of 16 men. And, for making use of the primordial ties, each section was composed of a single clan. Colonel L.C. Dunsterville, the commandant of this regiment, commented in 1912 that new clans should not be inducted in the sections as it would create obstacles in the evolution of clan spirit. Hence the personnel of different sections were never mixed. Training was based on sections. B and G companies were filled with the Afridi tribe. B Company had 4 sections. They were filled with Adam Khel, Malikdin Khel, Kuki Khel and Zakka Khel Afridis. G Company was filled with Kambhan Khel Afridis.

⁸⁵ Vansittart, *Gurkhas*, pp. 105, 109.

The Pathans were in F Company. 2 sections of this company were filled with the Sagri Khattak clan and the other 2 sections had Bangi Khel and Barak Khel Pathans.⁸⁶

Another example of the companies utilizing territorial, clan, and family links was the 4th Battalion of the 9th Jat Regiment. In 1903, this unit was allotted Ludhiana and Ferozepur divisions for recruitment. By 1908, this class company regiment had 4 Rajput companies (A, B, E, and F), 2 Gujar companies (C and D), and 2 Muslim Jat companies (G and H). A, D and G companies were recruited from Ferozepur, Faridkot and Bhawalpur districts. B, C and H companies enlisted men from Ludhiana, Maler Kotla and Nabha districts. E Company acquired its personnel from Ambala, Patiala and Karnal districts. F Company derived its manpower from Rohtak and Hissar districts.⁸⁷

Conclusion

The creation of an identity was not an event, but a process extending over a century. In one sense 1857 was a break in the history of regimental construction in particular, and British rule in general, because caste consciousness was replaced by 'racial' pride. But there were also elements of continuity, for example in the use of colours for establishing regimental pride.

The regiment building process included both indigenous and foreign strands. The British imported modern institutions like the regiment to India. But in the subcontinent it appropriated traditional elements like tribes. The regiments' uniforms bore evidence of the ethnic content. Hence the end product, the Indian regiments, were an amalgam of tradition and modernity. In fact, the construction of regiments

⁸⁶ *Army committee*, vol. 2, pp. 895-97, 900.

⁸⁷ 4th Battalion, 1903, 1908.

moulded many supposedly 'pre colonial' trends, like religious consciousness, in Indian society. Lionel Caplan has asserted that the British manufactured images, which reflected those very traits which the imperialists admired in themselves, for the various communities.⁸⁸ The imperial construct was more complex than that.

Since national ideology could not be utilized to propel colonial soldiers into the field of fire, the only option for the imperialists was to generate regimental camaraderie. The organizational gamut of the regiment was designed to reduce individuality at the cost of bureaucratization, in an attempt to transform the soldiers into a set of automatons. Distinct regimental traditions, by appropriating certain primordial traits, gave rise to a group ethos, which enabled the sepoys and the sowars to tolerate the inhuman 'face of battle'. Simultaneously, regimental loyalties also prevented mutinies among the colonial soldiers. Professional soldiers did not fight merely for monetary rewards.⁸⁹ The sepoys were motivated not only by tangible incentives but also by the regimental consciousness which the British manufactured. Therefore, the Indian Army cannot be typologized as a purely mercenary army. It was also a semi-professional force. How successful was the British policy? All went well till the mass casualties of the First World War destroyed the intricate clan and family networks within the Indian regiments. But then the Indian Army was designed for 'small wars' and not for modern industrial warfare, which also destroyed the most effective combat force of contemporary time, the German Army.

⁸⁸ Lionel Caplan, "'Bravest of the Brave': Representation of 'The Gurkha' in British Military Writings", *MAS*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1991), 589-93.

⁸⁹ John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York, 1993, reprint, 1994), p. 270.

Chapter 6

The Penal System of the Indian Army

The greatest danger we have to apprehend is from our native army; our military force is the exclusive tenure by which we hold the government, and the fidelity of the troops... is necessarily precarious; they are foreigners and mercenaries...

Henry Russell¹

The British viewed the colonial Indian Army as a mercenary force. British officers like Major General S.F. Whittingham assumed that the sepoys were attached to the British by economic advantage. More than half a century later, MacMunn, another officer, argued that though the sepoys were mercenaries, they were also motivated by the leadership of white men.² Most of the contemporary officers shared the view that discipline depended on the regimental commandants and underplayed the importance of institutions in inculcating loyalty among the Indian soldiers. Among the recent historians, at least one shares such a view.³ To ensure loyalty, the imperialists evolved a penal system based on force for disciplining the troops.

One of the main factor behind the Sepoy Army's military success against the indisciplined princely forces was because the British introduced an institutional command

¹ The quotation is from Bentinck's minute on military policy, no.810, 13 March 1835 in C.H. Philips (ed), *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck: Governor-General of India, 1828-1835*, vol.1, 1832-1835, (Oxford, 1977), p.1448.

² Whittingham to Bentinck, no.752, 20 July 1834, *Bentinck Correspondence*, p.1328; Major G.F. MacMunn, *The Armies of India* (1911, reprint, New Delhi, 1991), pp.208-20.

³ Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (1974, reprint, DehraDun, 1988), pp.164-96.

mechanism designed like the Western armies' mechanics of command. Since the British replaced the part time mercenaries with full time soldiers, the permanent military bureaucratic infrastructure aided in the emergence of a clear cut chain of command with a hierarchy of subordinates. This disciplinary mechanism was superior to the chaotic and the arbitrary attempts by the landed magnates in the indigenous forces to discipline their retainers. In the princely militaries there was no distinction between the army officers and the civilian bureaucrats. The jagirdars, who were in charge of land revenue assignments, were ordered to raise troops during campaigns. And they remained in charge of the operational control of the army. As the Indian rulers never maintained permanent military establishments, a specialized administrative machinery for inculcating military discipline never emerged in the pre British Indian armies.⁴ Even the Marathas, who introduced a Western-styled infantry force, failed to evolve a stable command structure.⁵ The net result was friable indigenous militaries, which disintegrated while confronting the more cohesive British-Indian Army.

In the post Mutiny era, the military penal system of the Indian Army underwent a transformation. From being a personalized, and decentralized system based on the regimental officers, it became an impersonal centralized system centred on the army head quarter and run by the Adjutant Generals and the Commander-in-Chiefs. This transition was part of the wider process of the transformation of the army's command structure.

⁴ Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Military Despatches of a Seventeenth Century Indian General* (Calcutta, 1969), pp. 30, 32-33, 105-06; Martin van Creveld, 'Technology and War, to 1945', in Charles Townshend (ed), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern War* (New York, 1997), pp. 176-79; G.D. Sheffield, 'Introduction: Command, Leadership and the Anglo-American Military Experience', in idem., (ed), *Leadership and Command: The Anglo-American Military Experience Since 1861* (London, 1997), p.8.

⁵ Randolph G.S. Cooper, 'Wellington and the Marathas in 1803', *International History Review*, vol. 11 (1989), pp. 31-38.

From a regiment-centric command apparatus, there emerged a centralized bureaucratic command culture. The penal structure and the command system were interrelated. In the regiment-centric command system, which centred on the regimental officers, the penal system depended on their discretionary power. But in the impersonal command cultivated by the army high command, the penal system functioned through the authority, based on rules and regulations, exercised by the distant military bureaucrats. This transition was a tortuous process. The vested interest of the regimental officers, the experiences of 1857, and the theoretical paradigm through which the imperialists' viewed India, acted as brakes on the army head quarter's attempt to inculcate an abstract impersonal loyalty among the soldiers in place of the troops' personal loyalty towards their commanding officers. The consideration that Indians were 'different' encouraged many among the civilian and military elites to think that the local officers should have supreme power. However, the army head quarter's policy of accelerating the transition towards a top down command system won, because of the improvement in communications, and the general trend towards building professional bureaucratic armies in Europe. As standing armies emerged in Europe, the military establishments created vast bureaucratic infrastructures for administering the armed forces from the top, and bringing all the personnel under unified regulations.⁶ After 1857, the colonial polity took up new responsibilities and became more bureaucratic. This also accelerated the centralizing trend in the army.

Centralization and bureaucratization were the two components of professionalism. Since in the second half of the 19th century, the colonial army's disciplinary apparatus became more tight and bureaucratic, it became more professional. However the colonial

⁶ Lowell J. Satre, 'St. John Brodrick and Army Reform, 1901-1903', *JBS*, vol. 15, no.2 (1976). See the essays by Geoffrey Parker, J.A. Lynn and W.A. Murray in G. Parker (ed), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare: The Triumph of the West* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 146-295.

scenario modulated this global process of modernization of the army in India, as the shift towards professionalism was played out within the colonial context. This chapter surveys the professionalization of the army's disciplinary structure within the colonial context. The first section shows the gradual reduction of the regimental commanding officers' power. The second section deals with the increasing role of impersonal institutions like the court martial mechanism, articles of war and the oaths in controlling soldiers. The third section focuses on the evolution of bureaucratic punishments, controlled by the impersonal institutions, in place of punishments shaped by the regimental officers. The last section refers to the army head quarter's attempt to provide some legal immunities to the soldiers, under the framework of the military law, as part of the high command's attempt to transform the arbitrary paternal despotism of the local officers into a sort of institutional disciplinary structure. The focus is on the principal stages in the transition of the penal system- under Bentinck, the immediate aftermath of the 1857 Mutiny, with the activation of the army high command between 1861 and 1865, and finally from the 1890s till the outbreak of the Great War.

I

The army authorities were divided on the issue of what constituted the bedrock of disciplinary administration: regimental officers who were the immediate superiors of the soldiers, or the distant army head quarter. One group of officers argued that the frontline commanders must have the power to discipline the soldiers, as this would help them to orient the troops' loyalty towards the regiments. But the army head quarter wanted the concentration of power in their own hands to construct extra-regimental loyalty bonds. The

head quarter was afraid that too much power in the hands of the regimental officers would result in the disintegration of the loyalty bonds. The army head quarter won, but only after a fierce debate about whether the commanding officers' power to punish the soldiers should be increased or decreased. The debate was also partly shaped by the British perception of Indian character and pre colonial polities.

In 1827, Lord Combermere (Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, 1825-30) reduced the commanding officers' power. They lost the authority to inflict corporal punishments and to dismiss the soldiers from service without the sanction of the superior officers. But in 1832, Edward Barnes (Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, 1832-33) gave back the commanding officers the power they previously enjoyed. They were authorized to summon courts, to carry out the proceedings and to exercise their judgement according to the nature of the cases. Moreover, they acquired the right to alter the intensity of the punishments by taking into consideration the previous character of the soldiers. Barnes disagreed that there were any cases of commanding officers misusing their power.⁷

The tussle between two lobbies within the army, one for the reduction and the other for the accretion of the commanding officers power, was going on when the Governor General Bentinck stepped in. He believed that, to strengthen the soldiers' ties with the Company, it was necessary to reduce the commanding officers' power. Bentinck accepted that the sahib-sepoy relationship was the human lynchpin which held the Indian Army together. He agreed that the soldiers' loyalty was necessary to check the internal rebellions and foreign dangers. Ties like nationalism, which operated in case of soldiers in Western countries, were lacking since the population from which Indian soldiers were recruited had

⁷ Lieutenant General S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty First Century* (New Delhi, 1993), Appendix I, p.533; No.802, 16 Feb.1835, *Bentinck Correspondence*, pp.14-27.

no natural affection towards the government. Bentinck believed that the Indian mentality being unique, they were attached only to the chiefs to whom they served, and their fidelity to their chiefs increased if the chiefs treated them with kindness. He further accepted the fact that the British officers were now in positions substituting those of Indian chiefs. So Bentinck concluded that the commanding officers' power must be reduced, to prevent the abuse of power, and to ensure that the soldiers could not be treated with injustice and harshness by their officers. Bentinck pointed out a recent case where a commanding officer had misbehaved with some soldiers. Though the officer in charge of the division condemned the incident, he could do nothing due to Barnes' 'unfortunate' order which concentrated all power in the hands of the regimental officers. The faulty behaviour of the commanding officer, according to Bentinck, sent a shock wave through the entire army. He deduced that such serious matters could not be left to the caprice of the individual officers but required high-level intervention. Bentinck's response was to reduce the regimental officers' power. They lost the authority to flog and dismiss the privates.⁸

In 1857, the Bengal Army rebelled and a reaction set in. Most of the British elite accepted that the loyalty mechanism disintegrated because of Bentinck's intervention, which reduced the power of the soldiers' immediate superiors (the commanding officers). So the assessment of the Mutiny strengthened the position of the advocates of the decentralized, regiment-centric penal apparatus. But these advocates differed on the quantum of authority to be delegated to the commanding officers.

The Punjab School, Bartle Frere and Brigadier J. Christie were for a regiment-oriented command culture, in which the penal system was pivoted around the regimental officers' authority. They assumed that the reduction of the commanding officers' power had

⁸ Nos. 802, 810, 16Feb. 1835, 10 March 1835, *Bentinck Correspondence*, pp.1427-29, 1431, 1448-49.

resulted in the disintegration of the command structure in 1857. They wanted more power in the hands of the commanding officers instead of in the hands of the distant army head quarter. This, they argued, was necessary because of the 'Oriental' character and the nature of the precolonial governments.⁹

The Punjab School and Frere pointed to the 'Indian mentality', which liked the immediate exercise of authority by the officers directly above them. The Punjab School believed that the Indian respected power in their immediate superiors, and not impersonal power thousands of miles away. So the 'Orientals' were not accustomed to constitutional checks and balances. The best policy would be to make the commanding officers supreme. The soldiers should look up to them for everything. Frere corroborated the Punjab School's view by arguing that divided responsibilities, in which power was shared by the Commander-in-Chief, Adjutant-General and the Brigadier, confused the soldiers and created suspicions and discontents in their minds. Owing to their very nature, they liked 'individual despotism' by their officers, whom they knew and trusted. They preferred serving men with an arbitrary will, to obeying a charter of rights. Frere warned that the Indians had no faith in the laws written on paper by men whom they did not know. So, in his view, discretion and judgement on the part of the commanding officers were better than laws embodied in manuals.¹⁰

Such officers also assumed that a sort of 'Oriental Despotism' by their commanding officers was favoured by the Indians because of the nature of the precolonial regimes. Frere assumed a linkage between the despotic nature of the pre British governments and the

⁹ *Supplementary report*, pp.20, 58, 311.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.33, 61, 65.

‘peculiar’ mentality of the Indians, which liked despotic rule. His view was that the British soldiers came from races accustomed to self-government, and were hence conscious about their rights and obligations. But the Indian did not have respect for any other form of government except the despotic one, because he was accustomed to absolute despotic polities, with only one master. The Punjab School also joined the fray by saying that, for the above reasons, the Indians were not suited for enjoying constitutional liberty.¹¹

Besides this ideological obsession, there was also another pragmatic dimension in the debate. Christie argued that before the power of the commandants was reduced just before 1857, the soldiers did everything to please their commandants. But after the commandants’ authority was reduced, the soldiers did not care much for the orders of their superiors. As a result, discipline declined.¹²

The Punjab lobby pointed out that the power of the commanding officers had decreased due to constant interference by the army head quarter in matters of the internal discipline of the regiments. This centralization of power in the hands of the Adjutant General and the Commander-in-Chief proved dangerous, as rewards and punishments were the sources of the commanding officers’ power over their men. And these two were being taken away from them. The Punjab School argued in favour of promotions controlled by the regimental officers, as they forced the soldiers to do their best for remaining in their officers’ good books. But Charles Napier (Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, 1849-50) was afraid that promotion by merit, which was assessed by the commanding officers, put too much power in their hands. So he replaced it with promotion based on seniority.

¹¹ Ibid., pp.33, 58.

¹² Ibid., p.311.

And this was criticized by the Punjab School, which pointed out that whenever regimental commandants tried to supersede inefficient soldiers, the latter obstructed this move by appealing directly to the military head quarter about the 'injustice' done to them. In such cases, the soldiers got promotions and the Colonels were humiliated among their subordinates. Again, article 112 reduced the quantum of punishment which the commandants could inflict on their men. The commandants could neither give extra duties to the soldiers, nor refuse them furlough. Christie also agreed with the Punjab School that, in the ultimate analysis, the discipline of the soldiers depended on the officers on the spot. To increase their authority was therefore the only solution.¹³

Bentinck and the Punjab School, along with Frere, agreed that the Indians were different, but they reached opposite conclusions about how to retain their loyalty. Bentinck wanted to reduce the commandant's authority to ensure humane treatment for the soldiers, but Frere and the Punjab School demanded an increase of power, to create an awe inspiring environment.

The Punjab School also came out with a formula to transform the commandant into a type of 'Oriental Despot', by increasing his power in the following spheres: (i) the authority to dismiss privates (ii) the power to flog the soldiers for insubordination or theft (iii) the authority to fine the soldiers (iv) the power to reduce the non-commissioned officers at least one rank and (v) the authority to imprison privates and non-commissioned officers.¹⁴

As a result, after 1859, the regimental officers' power increased. However not

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.38-39, 311; Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p.533.

¹⁴ *Supplementary report*, pp.33-34.

everybody, and certainly not the Adjutant General (who lost authority due to the shift of power towards the regimental officers), accepted the post Mutiny scenario without demur. Colonel E. Haythorne, the Adjutant General, kept a 'hawk-eyed watch' over the commanding officers' activities. He attacked summary trials and the other powers of the commanding officers.

Summary trials were the trump card in the commandants' hands. In such trials, the officers could deploy their authority unchecked, away from the supervision and counselling of their superiors. This came under sustained criticism from the Adjutant General. An officer punished several men of his regiment because they disobeyed orders on parade and used bad language. To punish them, the officer resorted to a summary trial. The Adjutant General pointed out that there was nothing wrong in punishing the soldiers, but the method used for punishing them was faulty. Summary trials could be used only when applications to a superior authority and the response to it were time consuming. But in this case the officer commanding the brigade was on the spot. The Adjutant General admonished the officer commanding the regiment and felt that he should have taken recourse to a general court martial.¹⁵ Haythorne pointed out that according to the 81st article of war, the proceedings of summary trials must be held in the presence of 2 commissioned officers, but in one recent case the rule had not been followed. He warned that, if the commanding officers broke the law, then they would be divested of their power of holding summary trials. To check further misuse of authority by the commanding officers in the summary courts martial, the Adjutant General introduced an institutional safeguard. He communicated to all the officers (from the commandants of the regiments to the officers commanding districts and divisions) that

¹⁵ Confidential circular, to officers commanding divisions, districts, brigades and Indian regiments, discipline, courts martial, Adjutant General's office, Circular no. 85/N, 25 Aug. 1863, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 3, N.A.I.

summary trials could be conducted by the commanding officers only in the presence of 2 or more European officers.¹⁶

The final attack came from the highest authority, General William Rose Mansfield, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1861 to 1865. His view was that the high handed behaviour by the commanding officers had brought the summary trials into disrepute. He cited a case where the commanding officer had acted on impulse and abused the power granted to him by the new articles of war. A sepoy went to his regimental officer for the redressal of some grievance but the officer instead of hearing it, called him *haramzada* (a term of abuse). When the sepoy reacted sharply, he was flogged.¹⁷

The army higher administration again acted in 1895, to curtail the commanding officers' power. The action was headed by the Adjutant General, G. Dec. Morton. He decreed that summary courts martial could not try offences by the soldiers against their commanding officers, unless the permission of the staff officers of the divisions, districts and brigades was obtained. When their sanctions were not recorded then the commanding officers had to state the reasons for proceeding on their own authority. In 1895, it was further ordered that, though the commanding officers who held the summary courts martial alone constituted the courts, in order to check or at least to reduce the gross misuse of power, each summary court martial was to be attended by an interpreter. The army administration demanded evidence to ensure that the summary courts martial procedures

¹⁶ Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts, brigades, regiments of Indian cavalry and infantry, summary trials, Adjutant General's office, E. Haythorne, Circular no. 26/N, 15 March 1864, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 4.

¹⁷ Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p. 534; Confidential circular, to officers commanding Indian regiments of cavalry and infantry, courts martial, 16 May 1865, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 5.

were in accordance with law. The commandants had to record their findings and sentences. The proceedings were to be signed by the commanding officers and all those officers in whose presence the trials were held.¹⁸

From 1859 onwards the Adjutant General's department reduced the regimental officers' power in other spheres beside the summary courts martial, by issuing new directives. In many cases the commanding officers' powers to be the sole judge of their men were taken away, and they were awarded joint responsibility for punishing their men. Fights between the soldiers and the Indian police were common. The Adjutant General pointed out one case: when the soldiers were marching through the Grand Trunk Road in the winter of 1862; they misbehaved with the police personnel. To prevent the recurrence of such affairs, the commanding officers of the regiments and detachments were ordered that, if such cases occurred in future, then they should report to the nearest military stations and enquiries should start under the officers in charge of the stations.¹⁹ For serious offences committed by the soldiers in detached employments, the regimental commandants could not award them punishments without accommodating the views of concerned departmental officials.²⁰ The regimental officers were further directed to obtain the sanction of the Commander-in-Chief before giving to the soldiers who had broken discipline, the

¹⁸ Rules for summary court martial held under the Indian articles of war, no. 374, 15 April 1895, G.O. N.A.I.

¹⁹ Circular to divisions, districts and stations, Adjutant General's office, H.Q., Simla, by order of Haythorne, Adjutant General, Circular no. 80/G, 19Aug 1863, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 3.

²⁰ *Army Regulations, India*, vol. 2, *Regulations and Orders for the Army* (Calcutta, 1913), p.1.

options of resigning from the service or of standing before the courts martial.²¹

Not content with directly reducing the regimental officers' authority, the Adjutant General increased the power of the senior officers. He informed them that they were empowered by article 141 to use their discretionary power during the courts martial of which they were the confirming officers.²²

Just before the onset of the Great War, though the commanding officers' power was decreased in some areas, the army head quarter increased their authority in many other spheres. This was probably because the top echelons of the army accepted the fact that, to a large extent, the discipline of the soldiers depended on the commanding officers, who could not be dispensed with. The high command probably grasped that the Indian Army was always scattered in small units performing police operations against the tribals and peasant insurgents. For conducting such small scale peace keeping operations, devolution of power to the regimental officers was necessary. Even in the 20th century the European armies gave much autonomy to the junior officers for coming up with innovative minor tactics. Thus the imperative of mission command (*Auftragstaktik*) probably forced the top echelon of the military bureaucracy not to eliminate the regimental officers' authority completely. The Indian Army had many similarities with the late 19th century American Army. Both were composed of volunteers and were principally engaged in low intensity operations. And the

²¹ Circular to divisions, districts and Indian regiments, cavalry and infantry, discipline, Adjutant General's office, Circular no. 129/N, 29 Sept. 1864, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 4.

²² Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts and brigades holding warrants for convening district courts martial, prisoners, Adjutant General's office, Circular no. 27/E, 16 Feb. 1865, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 5.

regimental officers also played a dominant role in the American Army.²³ Thus the structural and functional necessities of the Indian Army prevented complete centralization.

The extent of the reduction of the commanding officers' power becomes clear when we compare the power they enjoyed in 1913 with the programme of the Punjab lobby. The commanding officers lost the power to flog the soldiers. The power to award rigorous or simple imprisonment with or without solitary confinement was reduced from 75 days to only 28 days. The officers could imprison the privates for only 7 days, and lost the authority to arrest the non-commissioned officers. For misconduct, negligence and inefficiency, the non-commissioned officers and the privates could be deprived, by their commanding officers, of the whole or part of the pay of the day on which the offence was committed. But previously the commanding officers had the power to fine not only the privates and the non-commissioned officers, but also the commissioned officers, upto 1 month's pay per year. The senior officers received the power to remit punishments awarded by the regimental officers. A procedure came into existence to check the abuse of authority by the officers, and also to prevent them from exacting personal revenge from their men. Whatever punishments the regimental officers awarded to their men, had to be recorded in the conduct sheets.²⁴

The commanding officers' power as regards the summary courts martial remained unchanged. In such courts martial, much depended on the discretion of the commanding

²³ G.D. Sheffield, 'Blitzkrieg and Attrition: Land Operations in Europe, 1914-1945', in Sheffield and Colin McInnes (eds), *Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1988), p. 73; Sheffield, 'Introduction', in Idem. *Leadership and Command*, p. 4; Joseph G. Dawson III, "'Zealous for Annexation'": Volunteer Soldiering, Military Government, and the Service of Colonel Alexander Doniphan in the Mexican-American War', *JSS*, vol. 19, no. 4 (1996), pp. 10-36.

²⁴ *Army Regulations*, pp.1-3; *Supplementary report*, pp.31, 33.

officers who were allowed by law to pass judgements which depended on their perceptions of the soldiers' character. Again, they retained the authority to deprive the soldiers of their rank.²⁵

The spheres in which the commanding officers' authority registered a quantum jump were as follows: the power to issue reprimands to the officers and the authority to confine soldiers to the lines. However, for increasing confinement to the lines beyond 15 days, the commanding officers had to take the Adjutant's permission. During the short-term imprisonments, the commanding officers retained control over the prisoners. For minor breaches of prison discipline by the prisoner, which were enquired into by the commanding officers, the latter could award the following punishments (a) reduction of their diet (b) additional hard labour and punishment drill.²⁶

From 1895 onwards, enough space was provided to the commanding officers to allow them to award either minor or heavy forms of punishment for the same type of crime. If the commanding officers wanted, they could make life hell for the soldiers. So the latter had good reason to keep the officers in good humour. At the discretion of the commanding officers, prisoners serving sentences of hard labour were awarded the following tasks (i) digging and carrying earth (ii) filling up shelter trenches etc. The details regarding the apportioning of the hours for hard labour and drill, for raising the prisoners and locking them at night, were left to the will of the commanding officers.²⁷

²⁵ *Army Regulations*, pp.2-3, 5; Proceedings of the summary court martial, no.374, 15 April 1895, G.O.

²⁶ *Army Regulations*, pp.3-4, 6-8.

²⁷ No. 53, 1 Sept. 1896, G.O.

Most of these punishments were regimental in nature, as they were carried out inside the regiments and under the supervision of the regimental officers. All these increased the leverage of the regimental officers vis a vis their soldiers, which would have been impossible in case the punishments were conducted by the extra-regimental authorities. Why did the Adjutant General's department encourage regimental punishment? This was because, even for the high command, the colonial army remained regiment oriented. Again, regimental punishments were probably preferred because, if the accused were humiliated in front of their comrades, the fear of being shamed deterred others from breaking the law.

So the tussle about where the real locus of power should lie- whether with the regimental officers or with the Adjutant General's department- was shaped, not merely by the struggle between the front line commanders and the military bureaucrats at Simla and Calcutta, but also by the civilian-military elite's conception of the Indian society and the structure of the army.

II

The impersonal institutions at the disposal of the army head quarter for disciplining the soldiers, were the court martial mechanism, articles of war and the oaths. Just after 1857, those who favoured the decentralized regimental disciplinary structure stressed the inefficiency of such impersonal institutions and demanded more discretionary power in the hands of the commanding officers. Against their wishes, the army high command encouraged greater use of bureaucratic institutions for inculcating extra-regimental discipline.

The army possessed various types of courts martial, whose scope of jurisdiction

and composition varied. For the Indian Army, the British introduced, with slight modifications, the various types of courts martial which were operational in the late 18th century British Army.²⁸ The cases brought before the various types of courts martial depended on the gravity of the crimes and the ranks of the persons to be tried. At the top were the general courts martial. Then came the district or garrison courts martial and below them were the regimental courts martial. At the bottom were the summary courts martial which were controlled by the commanding officers under the loose supervision of the army head quarter.²⁹

The courts had a wide variety of punishments to discipline the soldiers. The quantum of punishment that could be awarded decreased as one moved down the hierarchy of the courts martial. General courts martial could award death sentences, imprisonments for life, or very long-term imprisonments. District courts martial had the power to impose fines, to demote and suspend the army personnel, and could award penal servitudes for limited periods.³⁰ Summary courts martial could inflict purely physical punishments like lashing, or purely financial punishments. The latter could be temporary (like stoppages) or permanent (like forfeitures of additional pay and pension). Such courts could also award a

²⁸ Arthur N. Gilbert, 'Military and Civilian Justice in Eighteenth Century England: An Assessment', *JBS*, vol. 17, no.2 (1978), pp.41-65; G.A. Stepler, 'British Military Law, Discipline, and the Conduct of Regimental Courts Martial in the later Eighteenth Century', *EHR*, vol. 102 (1987), pp. 859-81.

²⁹ Major Gorham, *A Short Course of Military Law as Applicable to Persons Subject to Mutiny Act to Which is Added Military Law as Applicable to Persons Subject to the Indian Articles of War* (Calcutta, 1887), pp.10, 14, 16, 167.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 147, 176, Appendix B; Field Marshal Earl Roberts, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* (London, 1897, reprint, 1898), p.44.

mixture of monetary and non-monetary punishments like imprisonments which involved loss of pay, as well as physical and mental discomforts.³¹

The higher the courts were, the greater was their power to try higher ranks and serious offences. As one goes down the hierarchy of the courts martial, the ranks and number of officers sitting in them declined. The general courts martial had power to try any ranks and only such courts had the authority to judge the commissioned ranks. They tried serious crimes like mutinies and insubordination. Each general court martial was composed of 9 officers.³² The presidents of such courts were very high ranking officers like Brigadier Generals or Lieutenant Generals.³³ Each district court martial was composed of 7 to 5 officers. The regimental courts martial tried minor offences and the officers commanding the regiments or the corps could summon these courts. Each such court had 3 to 5 officers.³⁴ The summary courts martial were held for such minor offences as receiving stolen goods. Even European non-commissioned officers summoned such courts.³⁵

The army high command was itself confused about the degree of centralization it should pursue. The greater the centralization, the greater would be the quantum of power in the hands of the higher courts martial and the senior officers. The jurisdiction of the

³¹ No. 374, 15 April 1895, G.O.

³² Gorham, *A Short Course*, p.170, Appendix D.

³³ Nos. 118, 469, 628, 9 Jan 1901, 17 June 1901, 12 Aug 1901, G.O.

³⁴ Gorham, *A Short Course*, pp. 25, 169, 176, 178.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.169-70; No. 374, 15 April 1895, G.O.

various types of courts martial varied with time, as the army high command dilly-dallied about the quantum of power to be devolved to the various courts, for the greatest efficiency in distributing 'justice', so as to maintain the disciplinary structure.

In 1827 Combermere ordered that the courts martial apparatus could award corporal punishments only when the crimes involved stealing, marauding and insubordination.³⁶ In 1859, the Punjab lobby demanded that those crimes which involved imprisonment of more than 6 months were to be tried by the district courts martial under the generals commanding divisions. They should have the power to order imprisonments upto 14 years with transportation, but punishments beyond this should require the Commander-in-Chief's intervention.³⁷ For the time being, the district courts martial acquired such power. But in 1861, the army head quarter, in pursuing the centralization policy, reduced the district courts martial's power, and increased that of the general courts martial. It was necessary to implement prompt punishments if the disciplinary mechanism was to remain intact. But assembling the general courts martial did not allow this. Due to communication and transportation difficulties, assembling such courts martial was time consuming. It took about 3 months. So in 1865 the power of the district courts martial was again increased. They acquired the power to inflict imprisonment (not exceeding 2 years) with hard labour and solitary confinement. They could also dismiss anybody.³⁸

In some cases, senior officers enjoyed wide discretionary power vis-a-vis the court

³⁶ No.802, 16 Feb. 1835, *Bentinck Correspondence*, p.1427.

³⁷ *Supplementary report*, p.33.

³⁸ Confidential circular, to officers commanding divisions and districts, Adjutant General's office, 17 Feb.1865, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 5.

martial. But how much power would be wielded by the officers, and at what level, was decided by the army head quarter's centralization scheme. Privates and non-commissioned officers who lost their arms were generally tried by the district courts martial. But in 1913, the general officers commanding the divisions acquired authority to order trials. Again, the Commander-in-Chief could annul proceedings of such trials.³⁹

The articles of war shaped the punishments. The army also made use of the oaths to run the court martial mechanism and to influence the soldiers' conscience, so that they obeyed the code of conduct prescribed by the articles of war. After 1857, the army was a divided house as regards the efficacy of the oaths and the articles of war. Christie was against imposing the rule of the articles of war on the soldiers. He pointed out that, before 1857, the articles of war were read out and explained to the men 4 times a year to acquaint the troopers of the Bengal Irregular Cavalry with the military code under which they were governed. But the discipline of the Bengal Irregular Cavalry deteriorated when they were brought under the articles of war. In his opinion the small zamindars, who joined the irregular cavalry, disliked rigid disciplines and parades.⁴⁰

The members of the Punjab School agreed with Christie about the inefficiency of reading out the articles of war during public parades. But, unlike him, they believed that the articles of war were necessary for the army's discipline. So the Punjab School came up with another solution. They demanded separate articles of war for the brown soldiers, because they were convinced that the character of the Indians was different from that of the British. The Punjab School cautioned against the amalgamation of the rules of the British Army

³⁹ *Army Regulations*, pp.4, 20.

⁴⁰ *Supplementary report*, p. 310.

with those of the Sepoy Army.⁴¹

Both Bentinck and the Punjab School accepted that the Indians were different from the Europeans, and hence it was necessary to change the articles of war. But they suggested changes in opposite directions. While Bentinck wanted 'enlightened' principles like the abolition of flogging, to change the articles of war, the Punjab School was for retention of flogging etc.⁴²

Distribution of the articles of war among the soldiers was not considered effective because of their low level of literacy. We have some figures about the literacy rate among the soldiers during 1857, and this rate more or less remained stagnant in the post 1859 period. No drivers of the artillery could read the articles of war in the vernacular, and only 10% of the *golundazes* understood them. About 15% of the troopers of the Punjab Irregular Cavalry were able to read and comprehend the articles of war in their own vernaculars. Only 5% of the Indians in the Punjab Irregular Force were able to read the articles of war in their own vernaculars. Overall, 10% of the soldiers were able to read the articles of war in their own vernaculars. An idea about the literacy among the late 19th century soldiers could be gleaned from analyzing the literacy rates among the groups who joined the army. Only 4% among the Marathas, 10% among the Deccani Muslims and 11% among the Jat Sikhs were literate.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., pp.21, 34.

⁴² Ibid., p.33; No.802, 16 Feb. 1835, *Bentinck Correspondence*, pp.1427, 1429, 1432.

⁴³ Major R.M. Betham, *Handbooks for the Indian Army: Marathas and Dekhani Musulmans* (Calcutta, 1908), pp. 73, 115; Major A.H. Bingley, *Handbooks for the Indian Army: Sikhs* (Simla, 1899), p. 125; *Supplementary report*, pp.15, 21, 34.

Though the civilian-military elite just after 1857 was not enthusiastic about the efficacy of the articles of war in acting as a deterrent, the army head quarter put its faith on the public readings of the articles of war. To make the personnel know about the serious punishment they would suffer for breaching discipline, the Commander-in-Chief issued orders that the prisoners should also attend the parades, when the articles of war were read out. Even the wounded and the sick were not left out of their orbit. It was ordered that the articles of war were to be read in the hospitals once in 3 months.⁴⁴

The spokesmen of the regiment-centric penal system displayed a casual attitude towards the oath and did not take it seriously. Christie bluntly told the men in the higher echelons that he did not remember the words of the oath which was administered to the recruits who joined the Bengal Army's Irregular Cavalry.⁴⁵ The Punjab lobby was skeptical of the policy of using the oath in strengthening the loyalty of the soldiers. No oath was administered initially in the Punjab Frontier Force. But in 1857, due to pressure from the army head quarter, it became obligatory for the men to take oaths. However, the authorities found it prudent not to humiliate old soldiers by ordering them to take an oath, as they had already served loyally for so long. However, all the new recruits had to take oath. After the 1857 bloodbath, the Punjab lobby argued that oaths were useless in practice, as the unconscientious soldiers would always disregard them. The Punjab lobby concluded that every solemn arrangement had its limitations and the soldiers willing to rebel could find loopholes in the oath. Still, the army head quarter took the oath seriously, and imposed it on the soldiers. The oath was introduced in 1840 for the recruits. The oath remained

⁴⁴ Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts and regiments, articles of war, Circular no.28/E, 16 Feb. 1865, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 5.

⁴⁵ *Supplementary report*, p.309.

unchanged even after the Mutiny.⁴⁶ The oath was simplified to the fewest possible words, as most of the soldiers were uneducated. The oath as follows: I inhabitant ofvillage,parganah,district,province; do swear before Almighty God, that I will be a faithful soldier, and servant of the British government, that I will march wherever I am directed and will obey the orders of any European officers. The oath contained information about the soldiers' geographical origin so that they could be traced easily in case of desertion. The oath contained an obligation for general service, though it was not implemented till 1856. Its implementation after that period caused grievances among the Purbiyas, which in turn accelerated the 1857 catastrophe.⁴⁷

Unlike the recruits' oath, the court martial proceedings' oath was characterized by the appropriation of the religiosity of the different groups. This was probably because the army took courts martial more seriously. So the oaths were designed to reach the religious belief of the soldiers to extract the 'truth' out of them. Each religious group's belief was invoked. For the Hindus, Parmeshwar Bhagwan, for the Muslims was Khuda, and for the Sikhs the Guru Granth Sahib was invoked. The emphasis on conscience for each religious group differed. For the Hindus, the emphasis was on dharma, which for the Muslims was iman and for the Sikhs, the wrath of the Guru Granth Sahib was invoked. The vernacular oath can roughly be translated as: 'I swear in the name of God that I will only tell the truth and I will not lie. If I lie then I will be punished'.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.30.

⁴⁷ The oath is from *Supplementary report*, p. 30. V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army, 1600-1974* (Calcutta, 1974), p.78.

⁴⁸ Oaths to be taken, no.374, 15 April 1895, G.O.

III

The punishment apparatus was initially personalized, as it was under the control of the regimental commanding officers. It gradually became impersonal, as control passed into the hands of distant military bureaucrats, who functioned from Simla and Calcutta. Under their bureaucratic supervision a series of modalities which involved lot of paper work came into existence for regulating punishment. Gradually the nature of punishment was transformed. From being deterrent and public, it became reformatory and private. This change was not due to parliamentary or public pressure through newspapers but due to internal bickering within the army about how best to construct the disciplinary apparatus over the soldiers.

Bentinck wanted to change the nature of punishment because of the changing material conditions and mentality of the Indian. His view was that the system of punishment had not changed since 1797, but, due to the Pax Britannica, education was spreading. To his mind, this had improved the Indians' character and made them more sensible of their rights. Consequently, degrading punishments could not be inflicted upon the soldiers any more. According to him, Indians were by nature attached to a government which treated them kindly. And they were very sensitive to disrespect. So if the state wanted allegiance from them, then corporal punishment must be abandoned. He then linked up this issue with recruitment. Those who joined the Bengal Army were obedient and faithful by nature. So there was no need to flog them: and if they were flogged, then it depressed them so much that they had to be discharged. Bentinck further claimed that high castes that could make 'good soldiers' avoided the army for fear of corporal punishment.⁴⁹ Bentinck believed that

⁴⁹ The same argument, that flogging prevented good men from entering the army, and depressed the spirit of those who were lashed, was also put forward by a radical minority in Britain to abolish lashing in late 18th and early 19th centuries. E.E.Steiner, 'Separating the Soldier from the Citizen: Ideology and Criticism of Corporal Punishment in the British Armies, 1790-1815', *Social History*, vol.8, no.1 (1983), p.25. Nos. 802, 810, 16 Feb. 1835, 13 March 1835, *Bentinck Correspondence*, pp.1426-28, 1430-32, 1454.

any attempt to check crimes through terror tactics was wrong. He pointed out that even in the British Army corporal punishment was gradually replaced from 1793 onwards because it was believed that lashing was both cruel and impolitic.⁵⁰

The Bombay officers wanted corporal punishment to maintain discipline.⁵¹ Major General Whittingham argued that, by abolishing corporal punishment, the colonial army would indeed derive a lot of advantages. But this should not be done unless flogging was abolished in the European army also. Otherwise the effect on the European troops would be to ‘...produce a dangerous feeling in the mind of the European soldier serving in the same brigade with black battalions, to find that he is still subject to a vile degradation from which his black comrade in arms has been so lately exempted’.⁵²

Bentinck overruled such opinions and replaced corporal punishment with solitary confinement. He wanted fines to be imposed on the prisoners during their confinement. He wanted corporal punishment to be replaced by the threat of dismissal from service. He assumed that the termination of service was the greatest deterrent and punishment for the Indian soldier. Bentinck viewed dismissal from service both as an economic loss and a

⁵⁰ From the late 18th century onwards, imprisonments and fines gradually replaced flogging in the British Army. The reformists like Bentinck faced severe challenges from the conservatives like Wellington, who wanted to retain the discipline of the lash. See the following essays: David Gates, ‘The Transformation of the Army, 1783-1815’, and Peter Burroughs, ‘An Unreformed Army? 1815-1868’, in David Chandler and Ian Beckett (eds), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (Oxford, 1994), pp.142-46, 171-187. Also see No.802, 16 Feb.1835, *Bentinck Correspondence*, p.1429.

⁵¹ No.802, 16 Feb. 1835, *Bentinck Correspondence*, p.1430.

⁵² Whittingham to Bentinck, no.740, 24 June 1834, *Bentinck Correspondence*, pp.1310-11 (The quotation is from p.1311).

social stigma for the soldier. He wrote that discharge deprived the soldiers of the chance of acquiring honour, as well as the pay which went to support their families.⁵³

Lord Hardinge (Governor General, 1844-48) reintroduced corporal punishment in 1845, against the opposition of the Adjutant General. Unlike Bentinck, Hardinge was unsure, in the context of the rising crime rate within the Bengal Army, about the deterrent value of dismissal as a punishment. The premium placed on flogging as a deterrent was based on a particular British view of Indian society which was quite different from Bentinck's. The former view painted a picture of the high caste soldiers with a sense of strict honour, so that flogging in public humiliated them. Fear of this made them behave very well. Also, the army did not like civilian interaction with its personnel even when the latter were punished. The army wanted to keep the civilian and military punishments separate, because it believed that if the civilian and military prisoners interacted while undergoing punishment, the company of civilians would ruin the soldiers. Under Bentinck, flogging was replaced by hard labour, which involved the soldiers working with civilian prisoners in constructing roads. So as to avoid the contact with civilians, the army wanted flogging restored. Another factor was that the British believed that, by implementing flogging, they were just following the age old Indian tradition. They were convinced that flogging existed in the Indian armies long before the British intervention. Further, there was pressure from 'below' from the soldiers themselves. Many high caste soldiers demanded flogging instead of hard labour, as repairing roads resulted in a loss of caste for them, as it involved digging and working with the low castes. Many soldiers demanded discharge for this reason. Finally, the army wanted to stop the continuous haemorrhage of manpower, as

⁵³ No.802, 16 Feb.1835, *Bentinck Correspondence*, pp.1429, 1432.

those soldiers who were awarded hard labour on the roads never rejoined their units.⁵⁴ So, the oscillation between the abolition and the introduction of lashing was a complex problem, which cannot be reduced to humane liberalism versus reactionary conservatism.

After the Mutiny, the Punjab School proposed the following forms of punishment: (i) imprisonment and solitary confinement (ii) fines for the soldiers (iii) reduction in rank (iv) flogging upto 30 lashes for theft or insubordination. (Those who were flogged three times were to be dismissed) (v) dismissal of the soldiers.⁵⁵

Frere supported Bentinck's proposal that dismissal from service was the greatest punishment for the soldiers. While Bentinck emphasized both the monetary and non-monetary aspects (honour and prestige) of the service, Frere harped only on the economic aspect. Both believed that the European soldiers were paid very little in the context of the wages prevalent in their societies. So they were unwilling to join the armies, and had to be conscripted and retained by fear, generated through various forms of punishment against desertions. They believed that the sepoys and the sowars were paid quite highly in relation to other occupations in their society, so they joined voluntarily for long periods. Expulsion from service, which also involved loss of pension, was a great loss for them.⁵⁶

By 1913, the following forms of punishment were in vogue- (i) imprisonment, rigorous or simple, long or short-term, with or without solitary confinement. Generally

⁵⁴ Douglas M. Peers, 'Sepoys, Soldiers and the Lash: Race, Caste and Army Discipline in India, 1820-1850', *JICH*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1995), p.212; Lieutenant F.G. Cardew, *A Sketch of the Services of the Bengal Native Army to the Year 1895* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1971), pp.203-04; *Peel committee*, pp.6-7, 9-10.

⁵⁵ *Supplementary report*, p.33.

⁵⁶ No.802, 16 Feb.1835, *Bentinck Correspondence*, p.1432; *Ibid.*, p.58.

imprisonment was reserved for serious and repeated offences; the guilty soldiers were confined to the lines before imprisonment (ii) confinement to the lines, not exceeding 28 days. An award of more than 14 days carried with it punishment drill. For minor offences, extra guard or fatigue duties were awarded (iii) non-commissioned officers and privates were admonished. Reprimands were for the commissioned officers (iv) deprivation of ranks.⁵⁷

Though some aspects of punishment, like dismissal, remained unchanged for over half a century, many transformations occurred in the nature of punishment. The shift was from flogging (public physical punishment) towards imprisonments under the extra-regimental authorities. This process started long before 1857. The number of lashes which could be inflicted on the soldiers, and the incidence of lashing, decreased with time. In 1806, 2 soldiers of the 2nd Battalion of the 4th Madras Infantry Regiment got 900 lashes each.⁵⁸ Flogging was resorted to very rarely, even after Hardinge's introduction of corporal punishment. In 1859 one officer, who had commanded a sepoy battalion for 7 years, claimed to have implemented corporal punishment not even twice during his career.⁵⁹ After the Mutiny, as part of British reaction to it, flogging remained, but the maximum number of lashes which could be awarded was limited to 50. After 1859 flogging became increasingly rare. We have only 1 recorded case between 1860 and 1865, when in 1865, a sepoy was

⁵⁷ *Army Regulations*, pp.2-3.

⁵⁸ T.A. Heathcote, *The Military in British India: The Development of British Land Forces in South Asia, 1600-1947* (Manchester, 1995), p.62.

⁵⁹ *Peel committee*, p.10.

flogged for misbehaving with his officer.⁶⁰ The real value of flogging lay in its threat and not in its actual implementation. By 1913, flogging had vanished from the army.

How did this shift occur, and what were the factors which influenced the changes in the punishment awarded? In the post Mutiny era, in the absence of an all-powerful Governor General like Bentinck, the mantle for shaping the contours of the punishment system went by default to the Adjutant General's department.

Imprisonment with hard labour, and solitary confinement, came into existence under the Adjutant General's orders.⁶¹ Solitary confinement in military custody was carried out in the following way. The prisoners were confined separately in the regimental cells or in the guards rooms and 2 prisoners were never put in a single cell. In case of rigorous punishment in military custody, the prisoners were employed on hard labour like spade work, and they had to undergo punishment drills.⁶² The Adjutant General further ordered that short imprisonment terms should be implemented in the barrack cells, and long imprisonment terms should be served in the state prisons.⁶³

The army did not want to lose to control over the soldiers even when they were punished. So the army's surveillance scheme influenced the punishment structure.

⁶⁰ Confidential circular, to officers commanding Indian regiments of cavalry and infantry, courts martial, 16 May 1865, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 5.

⁶¹ Confidential circular, to officers commanding divisions and districts, 17 Feb. 1865, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 5.

⁶² *Army Regulations*, p.8.

⁶³ Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts and brigades and holding warrants for convening district courts martial, prisoner's memo, Circular no.27/E, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 5.

Imprisonment with hard labour exceeding 3 months had to be undergone in the civil jails. And this resulted in mixing up the soldiers with the convicts. The army believed that interaction with such characters ruined the soldiers. So, in 1895, the Commander-in-Chief intervened, and ruled that those soldiers who were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour exceeding 3 months were to be dismissed.⁶⁴

The need for the combat effectiveness of the units, also shaped the type of punishment. Long periods of simple imprisonment, which were carried out in regimental custody, were discouraged in the army.⁶⁵ This was because such imprisonment reduced the combat efficiency of the units, as extra men had to be detached for guarding the prisoners. Moreover, finding a suitable place for imprisonment was problematic, especially when the regiments were on the move.

Some regimental British officers were cynical about the way in which punishments became less brutal. This was because the army head quarter took away their power of punishing the soldiers. As a result, the commanding officers ceased to be paternal despots. Just before the First World War, one officer commented that, under the new regulation, soldiers got 2 months solitary confinement in the regimental cell for desertion. The officer argued that this meant that the convicts had a better deal than their more faithful colleagues, who had to parade under the hot sun daily, while the prisoners enjoyed the coolness of the cells.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ No. 374, 15 April 1895, G.O.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Major G. Casserly, *Life in an Indian Outpost* (London, n.d.), p.198.

When the courts martial ordered solitary confinement, the army administration had problems in implementing it. In 1865, when a court martial sentenced a sepoy of a regiment stationed in the Dooars, solitary confinement in the Rungpoore jail, the Bengal government pointed out that the jails in Bengal were unsuitable for such a purpose.⁶⁷

Practical difficulties in carrying out sentences influenced the army's response. By the first decade of the 20th century, imprisonment became the most common form of punishment. So the government started constructing detention barracks for short imprisonments and military prisons for long-term imprisonment. To man the detention barracks and the prisons, an elaborate staff network was also laid down. The Lucknow detention barrack had 2 drill instructors and 4 assistants. The military prison cum detention barrack at Poona had 2 drill instructors and 8 assistants. This was necessary as short-term imprisonments were occasionally accompanied by extra drills to be performed under the drill inspectors' eyes.⁶⁸

The army administration had a penchant for book-keeping. This was meant to check the abuse of authority by the officers, i.e. to prevent personal revenge against soldiers, and also to create written precedents, for the incoming officers to learn about how to punish certain crimes. Another reason for an enormous machinery was to keep a tab on the activities of all the soldiers. Such reports were used while judging their crimes and awarding punishments. Service records shaped the nature of punishments to be inflicted. So the army kept the following forms of documents. Registers were kept by the Adjutants in which the numbers and names of the prisoners, their crimes and periods of sentence, dates

⁶⁷ Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts and Indian regiments, prisoners memo, Simla, Circular no. 127/N, 9 Sept. 1865, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 5.

⁶⁸ *Army Regulations*, p.7.

of admission and discharge, were all recorded. The Adjutants also maintained the prisoners' punishment books which recorded all the offences committed by the prisoners, the punishments awarded, and sentences they had served previously (if any).⁶⁹ Breach of discipline by the non-commissioned officers and men were entered in the defaulters' sheets. The records of the commissioned officers remained with the Deputy Adjutant General. These records aided in the assessment of the personnel by the army's disciplinary mechanism as these sheets contained convictions by courts martial, cases of summary reductions, and cases involving imprisonments and confinements. The army also kept character sheets of the soldiers because, while passing sentences against the convicts, their previous character was taken into account. Each character sheet contained the designation of the unit in which the soldier was employed, the date and the occurrence of the crime, the opinion of the officer and the rank and the name of the soldier.⁷⁰

The Indian Army's punishment system was much better than some colonial armies like the African colonial armies and even some European armies like the Rumanian Army. Both these armies retained brutal lashing till World War II.⁷¹ Some aspects of the punishment system of the Sepoy Army were harsher than those of the British Army. For example, from 1868 onwards, no British soldier was awarded corporal punishment during peacetime, but in the Indian Army, the regimental court martial could award 50 lashes to

⁶⁹ No.53, 1 Sept.1896, G.O.

⁷⁰ *Army Regulations*, p.130; Adjutant General's office, Simla, 3 Feb. 1896, G.O.

⁷¹ David Killingray, 'The Rod of Empire: The Debate over Corporal Punishment in the British African Colonial Forces, 1888-1946', *Journal of African History*, vol.35 (1994), pp. 201-216; Field Marshal Von Manstein, *Lost Victories* (1958, reprint, DehraDun, n.d.), p.207.

the soldiers till 1877 even during peacetime.⁷² On the other hand many facets of the colonial army's punishment mechanism were more humane than those of the British Army. The humiliating practice of branding the British Army deserters⁷³ was absent in the colonial army.

IV

The advocates of a personalized regimental command structure demanded that the privates and the Indian officers' right to challenge their commanding officers, should be reduced to the maximum possible extent. But the army head quarter tried to increase the quantum of rights enjoyed by the soldiers within the army's legal framework. This tussle centred around three issues: the share of the Indian officers in the running of the disciplinary mechanism, how the law was 'perverted' to deny certain legal rights to the soldiers, and the advantages the soldiers derived from the military law.

After the Mutiny, the army witnessed a debate about the role of the Indian officers in manning the disciplinary mechanism. The supporters of the decentralized regimental disciplinary culture, in pursuing their formula of making the regimental officers arbitrary despots, wanted the Indian officers to be mere cyphers. But the army head quarter obstructed this scheme. The discussion revolved round the question of the professional expertise of the Indian officers, and their loyalty during 1857.

Even after the questionable role of the Indian officers during the Mutiny, the imperialists vetoed the proposal of replacing them with the non-commissioned British

⁷² Gorham, *A Short Course*, p.178; J.R. Dinwiddy, 'The Early Nineteenth Century Campaign against Flogging in the Army', *EHR*, vol.97 (1982), p.331.

⁷³ Peter Burroughs, 'Crime and Punishment in the British Army, 1815-1870', *EHR*, vol.100 (1985), p.570.

officers. The Punjab lobby wanted the Indian officers to continue, as they were seen as a vital link in man-management. European corporals and sergeants could not replace the Indian officers, as the former had no influence over the soldiers, nor did they know what the latter desired. The Punjab lobby concluded that if the Indian officers were selected on the basis of merit, then they could perform better than the European sergeants. Finally, Frere commented that the Indian commissioned officers were superior in professional intelligence to the European non-commissioned officers. So there could not be any question of their replacement with European non-commissioned officers.⁷⁴

Christie argued that, during the Mutiny, the Indian officers failed to show absolute fidelity. They neither gave information in advance about the uprising, nor did they actively aid in quelling it. He calculated that about that 50% of the Bengal Army's officers supported the mutineers. The Punjab lobby, unlike Christie, concluded that most of the Indian officers would remain loyal during a crisis. The Sikh officers had remained loyal: there was no mutiny in the Punjab Irregular Force in 1857. Prior to 1857, the Indian officer corps was more or less loyal, and during the Mutiny the Indian officers were carried away by the storm, rather than leading it. Frere, unlike others, emphasized the Indian officers' loyalty during the Mutiny. They passed information about the disaffection of their men, and tried to keep them under control. During the emergency, they showed intelligence and fidelity. So in his view the Indian officers should be given responsibility.⁷⁵ In the ultimate analysis, the Indian officers were necessary. The question, then, was how much power they should exercise.

⁷⁴ *Supplementary report*, pp. 23, 26, 35, 56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 35, 38, 55, 310.

The supporters of the personalized command structure challenged the practice of promotion on the basis of seniority, arguing that it led to dull Indians entering in the officer cadre. Interestingly, none of them supported impersonal tests like examinations, to choose the Indians for officer ranks. Rather, they wanted discretionary power to appoint Indian officers to remain in the hands of the British officers. This, they believed, would make the personal loyalty bonds between the British officers and Indian officers stronger, as the latter group would be dependent on the sahib's favour for continuation in their posts and for promotions. A subservient Indian officer corps would pose no challenge to the sahibs. Hence the high command's programme to inculcate professionalism among the Indian officers by conducting written tests for their promotions⁷⁶ was obstructed by the self-interested regimental commanders. For sustaining the patronage network, many officers of the late 19th and early 20th century American Army also opposed promotion, to officer rank, on the basis of merit.⁷⁷

In the Bengal Irregular Cavalry, promotion was on the basis of a combination of merit as assessed by the regimental officers, and seniority. Christie wanted promotions on the basis of selection by the British officers, which he felt would provide intelligent Indian officers. There were no tests or examinations required for promotions in the Sepoy Army. Instead of impersonal assessments for assessing the Indian officers' professional expertise, Christie wanted to continue the personalized sahib-sepoy relationship, in which the sahibs enjoyed the power to make Indians officers. So he declared that there was no need for any

⁷⁶ For the view that examinations in the officer corps gave birth to professionalism see William C. Fuller, *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881-1914* (Princeton, 1985), pp. 4, 8-11.

⁷⁷ Ronald J. Barr, 'High Command in the United States: The Emergence of a Modern System, 1898-1920', in Sheffield, *Leadership and Command*, p. 65.

examinations to be conducted by the army bureaucracy.⁷⁸

The Punjab lobby argued that in the Bengal Army, as well as in the Punjab Irregular Force, for promotions, preference was given to seniority rather than merit. The privates regarded the officers' ranks as rewards for long service. But due to their extreme age, when they reached the officers' ranks, they became inefficient. The Punjab lobby concluded that the Indian officers could be intelligent and useful, if only their British officers selected them on the basis of merit.⁷⁹

Frere pointed out that promotion by seniority did not occur in the Bombay Army. It was instead on the basis of assessment of the Indian soldiers' characters by the British officers. He wanted this pattern in all the armies, as it would allow the British officers to choose 'useful' Indians as officers.⁸⁰

Christie argued that the Indian officers were unfit to conduct the courts martial. For the Punjab lobby, the Indian officers were unfit to sit in courts martial, not because of any intrinsic defect of Indians, but for because Indian officers had been promoted on the basis of seniority. The Punjab lobby probably believed that promotion by seniority encouraged the Indian officers to be independent. But their argument was couched in ideological terms. The Punjab lobby claimed that the Indian officers lacked 'moral resolution'. They proposed that if the Indian officers had to sit in the courts martial, they needed to be mentally very capable, and for that their selection on the basis of merit by the regimental officers was

⁷⁸ *Supplementary report*, pp. 38, 54-55, 309-310.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 37.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

necessary. If this scheme was accepted, then it would have given the commanding officers total control over the Indian officers, which was the plan of the Punjab School. The Punjab lobby's plan was to disallow the Indian officers entry in the regimental courts martial.⁸¹ This was because the Punjab lobby wanted to give the regimental commanding officers full authority over their soldiers. But the army head quarter did not accept this programme of the Punjab lobby. Indian officers were included in the regimental courts martial.⁸²

Frere wanted the Indian officers in the courts martial to be subordinated to the commanding officers. So he agreed with the Punjab School that, if the Indian officers were selected on merit assessed by the white officers instead of seniority, then they would manage the courts martial better.⁸³

The regimental officers were especially unhappy about sharing power with the Indian officers. Casserly, a regimental commandant of a Gurkha battalion, argued in the first decade of the 20th century, that Indian soldiers disliked to be judged by Indian officers, because the latter were swayed by considerations of race and caste, and village and family feuds. So they showed favouritism towards some and dislike towards others. Occasionally, personal equations also operated, as most of the Indian officers were promoted from the ranks. When the soldiers committed crimes, they were allowed the option of whether to be judged by courts martial composed of Indian officers or British officers. Casserly asserted that during his long service, he never saw even one case when a sepoy demanded to be

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 33, 36, 38, 312.

⁸² Gorham, *A Short Course*, p.171.

⁸³ *Supplementary report*, pp.56, 58.

judged by the Indian officers.⁸⁴

The army high command turned a deaf ear to such reactionary regimental officers and inducted the Indian officers in all types of courts martial. Indian officers were included in the regimental, district and detachment courts martial by 1877.⁸⁵ In 1895, the Adjutant General, alarmed at the commanding officers abusing their authority in the summary courts martial, tried to check the abuse by giving observer status to Indian officers in such courts. He ordered that 2 commissioned Indian officers should attend each summary court martial. From that date onwards, Indian commissioned officers also occasionally acted as presidents of the general courts martial, the apex body.⁸⁶ Though the Indian officers enjoyed limited power, it showed an increase over time.

The high command left the petty private affairs of the soldiers outside its domain, as such minor matters did not pose a threat to the war machine. But such autonomy to the soldiers somewhat eroded the regimental officers' authority. An autonomous locus of power for the soldiers was their own regimental court or panchayat where they settled their disputes without any interference by the British officers and Western military laws. The panchayati system was a unique case of Indian Army bowing to indigenous tradition to conciliate the soldiers. Indians were given limited power to sort out matters not directly related with the army. And this reflected the limitations of the army's reach over the private domains of the soldiers. Panchayats were held, with the consent of the parties concerned,

⁸⁴ Casserly, *Life*, pp.200-201, 241, 257-258.

⁸⁵ Gorham, *A Short Course*, p.171.

⁸⁶ Army H.Q., Simla, Nos. 94, 374, 3 Jan.1895, 15 April 1895, G.O.

for the settlement of private disputes. The disputants appointed the arbitrators themselves, and their decision was final. The commanding officers had no power to challenge the panchayats' verdicts. The British officers merely coordinated the process by recording the names of the arbitrators and the subjects of the disputes. However, the power of the panchayats to award punishment was limited. The president (an Indian) of the panchayat could only stop the pay and allowances upto 6 months.⁸⁷

After the Mutiny, the Punjab School demanded the abolition of the panchayats, to bring the soldiers within the orbit of direct military legal administration, for closer supervision. But Christie supported the opposite view when he argued that the court martial mechanism did not suit the soldiers. He was for its replacement by the panchayats.⁸⁸ Christie was for 'Orientalizing' the army by introducing the indigenous panchayati system in place of the alien articles of war etc. He seemed to imply that 'Europeanizing' the Sepoy Army caused the Mutiny. To some extent, the post Mutiny army high command accepted Christie's view, as a limited panchayati system was introduced.

Just after 1857, there was a reaction among the British officers. They wanted to tighten up the military judicial system, as they believed that the lax penal system had encouraged the soldiers to rebel. As part of this reaction, the Punjab lobby tried to address the defective technicalities of the court martial mechanism, which allowed the 'guilty' soldiers to escape the law. The Punjab lobby pointed out that errors in procedures or sentences should not be allowed to quash the proceedings, thereby allowing the guilty soldiers to escape punishment. They further argued that when courts sentenced prisoners to

⁸⁷ *Army Regulations*, p.6.

⁸⁸ *Supplementary report*, pp. 33, 309.

punishment in excess of that prescribed by the articles, the confirming authority, instead of releasing the prisoners, should only reduce the punishment. Again, those prisoners who were erroneously tried and convicted by the lower courts for serious crimes should, instead of being released, be remanded for trial by the higher courts.⁸⁹

Just after the 1857 bloodbath, the Punjab lobby, in an attempt to increase the British officers' power, demanded the revocation of the soldiers' right to appeal against the punishment given by the Brigadiers. In the irregular units, there existed elements of arbitrariness. No attempt was made to stick to the book, and the commanding officers enjoyed wide discretionary power over their men. When the nature of the proofs against the offenders was insufficient to convict them according to the requirements of the articles of war, but the criminal's 'guilt' was evident to the British officers, then such soldiers were dismissed without trial.⁹⁰

Some articles of war strengthened the commanding officers' power over the soldiers. Article 70 gave them the power to punish the soldiers for unspecified offences. To leave no aspect of the soldiers' activity uncovered, the offences included under this article were deliberately left unspecified. To back it up, there was article 25, which gave blanket power to the commanding officers for controlling the soldiers. Under it, the soldiers could be punished for 'unbecoming behaviour' (and the right to define it lay with the sahibs). Another article which reduced the soldiers' power of protest was article 167. This punished those soldiers who made complaints against officers, if such complaints appeared as

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.33.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp.33-34.

frivolous or groundless to the commanding officers.⁹¹ This certainly discouraged the soldiers from lodging complaints against their officers, as the alien officer cadre always acted as a body against the soldiers. So even genuine complaints could be interpreted as groundless and frivolous.

Though in many ways the colonial military law curbed the troops' right to challenge the British officers, the soldiers enjoyed some protection regarding the quantum of punishment to be inflicted on them. This was meant to prevent permanent damage to their bodies and minds. It was not due to any humanitarian reasons, but because the army wanted to prevent permanent physical damage to its personnel, as it took a lot of time and money to convert the peasants into soldiers. The limit on the amount of physical cum mental punishment to be inflicted, arose in order to safeguard the army's own combat effectiveness. The army needed the human material back, in a condition of total fitness, after the prescribed period of punishment.

For the mental stability of the soldiers, solitary confinement was limited to 14 days at a time, and could not exceed 84 days in a year.⁹² The soldiers could not be flogged twice in 1 month.⁹³ The total amount of hard labour and drill combined, to be exacted from the prisoners daily, was limited to 6 hours in hot weather and 7 hours in cold weather. Extra periods of hard labour and drill were awarded for offences committed by the prisoners subsequent to their initial crimes. But in no circumstances was drill to exceed 2 hours a day

⁹¹ Captain G.F.W. Macmohan, *A Guide to the Correct Framing of Charges under the Indian Articles of War Suitable to All Occasions* (Bombay, 1887), pp.12, 27-28.

⁹² Gorham, *A Short Course*, p.182.

⁹³ *Supplementary report*, p.33.

(1 hour at a time) and hard labour was not to exceed 5 hours each day. Extra periods of hard labour or drill could be awarded only upto 7 days. During hot weather, and at high noon, hard labour was confined to indoor work.⁹⁴

The army showed concern to ensure that the punishments were awarded properly and not in an arbitrary manner. It was the responsibility of superintending non-commissioned officers to see that hard labour was not to exceed the prescribed limit, and in the hot season it was performed in shade.⁹⁵ When prisoners underwent imprisonment, non-commissioned officers took care of them. It was their duty to see that the prisoners got meals at regular hours. After locking up the prisoners at night, the keys were given to the officers of the guards who were responsible for the safe custody of the prisoners. Their duty was to take the prisoners to hospital if they fell ill.⁹⁶

No detention rooms were occupied without the recorded sanction of the general officers. They gave their sanctions after the reports came from the boards, which consisted of Assistant Directors of Medical Service, or the staff officers of the divisions or brigades. The boards had to certify that the rooms were well-ventilated, warm and fitted in accordance with the sanitary requirements and standard plans. On the arrival of the prisoners, the commanding officers had to ascertain whether the rooms were fit for their detention.⁹⁷ Seniors officers were informed by the army high command that, when the

⁹⁴ No.53, 1 Sept 1896, G.O.

⁹⁵ *Army Regulations*, p.8.

⁹⁶ No.53, 1Sept. 1896, G.O.

⁹⁷ *Army Regulations*, p.7.

prisoners had to undergo long-term imprisonment at the state prisons, over crowding must be prevented, as this was injurious to the prisoners' health. Before sending the prisoners, the officers were to ascertain whether there was enough space in the prisons.⁹⁸

During imprisonment, the prisoners were visited daily by the medical officers or hospital subordinates to ensure that their health was not deteriorating. Even while punishing them, the army took extra care of unfit or sick soldiers. On the morning of each day before the courts sat, medical officers examined accused persons awaiting trial. And the commanding officers were responsible for ensuring that if the accused soldiers were declared by the medical officers as unfit to undergo trial, then such criminals should not be brought before the courts.⁹⁹ During summary courts martial also, the commanding officers had to attach the medical certificates of the accused to prove that they were all right.¹⁰⁰ To ensure that the officers were keeping an eye on the health of the soldiers, even when they were undergoing punishment, visitors books were kept, in which were recorded the date and hour of visits by the medical officers. The army regulated their diets. For misbehaviour, the prisoners' diet could only be reduced upto 3 days at a time.¹⁰¹ In 1863, the Commander-in-Chief declared that those prisoners who were on a bread and water diet

⁹⁸ Circular to officers commanding divisions, districts and brigadiers holding warrants for convening district courts martial, prisoner's memo, Adjutant General's office, Calcutta, Circular no.27/E, 16 Feb.1865, Adjutant General's Circular, vol. 5.

⁹⁹ *Army Regulations*, pp. 8, 50.

¹⁰⁰ Army H.Q., Simla, no. 374, 15 April 1895, G.O.

¹⁰¹ No.53, 19 Sept. 1896, G.O.

should not be subjected to hard labour.¹⁰²

The soldiers also enjoyed various other legal rights. Article 40 gave the soldiers the right to challenge those commanding officers who struck or ill treated them.¹⁰³ For matters of a purely personal nature, the soldiers could appeal directly to the divisional commanders. So channels to the higher authorities existed for the soldiers to show their grievances against their immediate superiors. When accusations were made against the British officers, then the commanding officer called a court of inquiry. In case of injury to the soldier, the proceedings of the court of inquiry was confirmed, not by the regimental officer, but by the brigade commanders. If the soldiers were dissatisfied, then they could apply for the general courts martial.¹⁰⁴

The soldiers enjoyed certain legal rights during the summary courts martial proceedings. Though the commanding officers had the final say, the soldiers were given the chance to argue their case during their defence and partly also during the prosecution and their reply. The prisoners were given the option to cross-examine each witness after the officers examined them, and this cross-examination was recorded. To avoid manipulation by the commanding officers, it was ordered that if the prisoners refused the right of cross-examination, then this was to be recorded.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Prisoners court martial memo, Circular no.116/E, 14 Oct. 1863, Adjutant General's circular, vol. 3.

¹⁰³ No.357, 1 April 1895, G.O.

¹⁰⁴ *Army Regulations*, p.10.

¹⁰⁵ Rules for the summary courts martial held under the Indian articles of war, proceedings of the summary courts martial, Simla, no.374, 15 April 1895, G.O.

The higher army administration did not always tolerate the soldiers' right to challenge their commanding officers. This was borne out in the case of Sheikh Torab, a Jemadar who petitioned to the high command in 1861 saying that he had been discharged without any charge being brought against him. The petitioner was subsequently informed that his appeal could not be entertained, as the army held that the commanding officer's decision was final in this regard.¹⁰⁶

At times, the army showed more generosity. In the same year, Sheikh Ghulam Husain, a Havildar, appealed to the army head quarter, that he had been dismissed from service and prayed for readmission, or at least pension for his long and faithful service. In this case, his petition was not rejected. The soldier was informed that the Adjutant General had passed the petition on to the Commander-in-Chief.¹⁰⁷

From these two cases, we can deduce that at least some soldiers were not satisfied with their commanding officers' high-handed behaviour. So they appealed to the high command for justice. But the response of the top echelons of the army varied, because they were confused. On the one hand, they were ready to prevent the commanding officers from becoming too powerful, but on the other hand, they were afraid that if the soldiers were backed to the full, then it would jeopardize the power structure.

Conclusion

In the second half of the 19th century, the regiment-oriented personalized penal structure transformed itself into an impersonal bureaucratic disciplinary system. This transition was

¹⁰⁶ Progs. nos. 27-28, 2 March 1861, M.D.P. N.A.I.

¹⁰⁷ Progs. nos. 56-57, 4 March 1861, M.D.P.

an ongoing process which had started long before 1857. In many ways, this transition was uniquely colonial. As far as the operative philosophy of the army was concerned, the intellectual paradigm through which the sahibs viewed the sepoys and sowars, and the relation between caste and corporal punishment, were specificities of the colonial scenario. In the organizational apparatus of the army, the panchayati system and the courts martial oaths (adapted for religions) were distinctly Indian.

The continuous tension between two lobbies- one wishing to make local commanders supreme and another wishing to reduce the local bosses' power and to centralize power in the hands of the distant military bureaucrats, was the principal feature of the transition process. The spokesmen of the regiment-centric command culture wanted total repression of the soldiers, and tried to monopolize the hold over the punishment apparatus by the British regimental officers. But the army high command's policy was aimed to thwart the paternal despotism of the regimental sahibs by giving some legal protection to the Indians.

While most of the contemporary civilian-military elite emphasized the importance of the personality of the British regimental officer, the military high command widened the scope of the impersonal institutional disciplinary mechanism. There was a gradual shift from patriarchal despotism towards bureaucratic discipline. The transition was from the personalized response of the officer to the crimes of his men, towards an impersonal evaluation based on bureaucratic assessment by the Adjutant General's department. A British historian, Ian F.W. Beckett, claims that in the Victorian era, the armies of the British empire were governed by personalized command structures.¹⁰⁸ However, our analysis shows that at least in the Indian case, there was a transition from personalized command

¹⁰⁸ Ian F.W. Beckett, 'Command in the Late Victorian Army', in Sheffield, *Leadership and Command*, pp. 37-56.

system towards an impersonal control system. However this shift was incomplete and occurred in fits and starts.

While Bentinck the 'liberal' challenged Combermere before 1857, in the post 1859 period, the Adjutant General's department upheld Bentinck's line against the 'reactionaries' who were for increasing the regimental 'satraps' power and favoured harsh punishment. This tussle, as regards centralization versus decentralization of power for disciplining the mercenaries continued till the First World War. Complete centralization and bureaucratization of the command system was not possible due to the British view about the Indians, tactical cum administrative organization of the army and illiteracy among the Indian troops. Incomplete transformation partly explains the low combat performance of the colonial army in the First World War but some attempts towards an impersonal command system also prevented the privates and the Indian officers from becoming rebellious and politicized before 1914.

Chapter 7

Courts Martial in the Indian Army

Crime is very rare. Indians are one of the best conducted soldiers of the world. There are fewer acts of insubordination, disobedience compared with the best disciplined British troops.

Major General H.W. Norman¹

The Indians were not only willing to join the Sepoy Army, but the sepoys and the sowars were also generally well behaved. Not overapplication of violence, but rather the lack of it, was the characteristic of the disciplinary infrastructure of the army. How and why was the colonial army able to maintain 'order' among its personnel? Disintegration of discipline was rampant in the pre colonial forces. The soldiers of the Indian princely armies were undisciplined, which resulted in their frequent defeats during the 18th century. Desertions were common, and the troops frequently changed sides. They were often unwilling to engage in pitched battles. Such a state of affairs resulted mainly from the lack of a good machinery for implementing discipline. The Indian potentates' forces were semi-permanent organizations, which were raised by military entrepreneurs during emergencies, and disbanded when the crises were over. The warlords who recruited the troops were responsible for their behaviour.²

One of the principal secrets of British success was the introduction of the court martial mechanism. The welfare mechanism attracted Indian manpower towards the army. The imperial genesis of the soldierly ethos of the 'martial' communities, and

¹ Confidential memorandum on the Indian Army, 13 Jan. 1875, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

² William Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls: Its Organization and Administration* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1994), pp. 9, 14, 182, 234-5, 299; Ravindra Kumar Sharma, 'The Military System of the Mewar (Udaipur) State (Ca. 800 to 1947 A.D.)', *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 30 (1986), pp. 117-19.

their identification with their regiments, enabled the British to condition the peasants into loyal and disciplined soldiers. Finally the courts martial apparatus promptly nipped indiscipline in the bud, before it could spread among the rank and file. The evolution of a bureaucratic penal system, pivoted around the court martial apparatus, and geared towards moderation, enabled the imperialists to maintain discipline in the colonial forces. David Omissi's monograph focuses on the mutinies which occurred, especially from the First World War onwards.³ This chapter concentrates on the individual crimes of the soldiers till 1913.

The regimental commandants favoured the summary courts martial, as they themselves presided over such bodies. However after 1857, the Adjutant General's department concluded that the regimental officers were abusing their power. The army headquarters' view was that the arbitrary despotism of the regimental officers was responsible for the disintegration of loyalty on a large scale in 1857. To prevent another mutiny, rather than depending on the personalized sahib-sepoy relationship, the army went for an impersonal apparatus. Hence the army headquarters discouraged the regimental colonels from calling summary courts martial. Instead, the army favoured the general courts martial. The argument was that since 5 officers sat over each general court martial, the bias and prejudice of the commanding officers would not influence the sentences of these bodies. The higher military bureaucracy rejected the regimental officers' view that the summary courts martial were necessary for prompt punishment, as assembling a general court martial took time.⁴

³ David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (London, 1994), pp.113-52.

⁴ Minute on the organization of the Indian Army, Ch. 5, pension system, para 21, 38, 11Oct. 1875, Norman minutes; Confidential circular to officers regarding courts martial, Circular no. 85/ N, 25 Aug. 1863, vol. 3, Circular to officers as regards summary trials, Circular no. 26/N, 15 March 1864, Circular

The regimental officers rarely called summary courts martial and they were ordered to enter them into the regimental records. The 3rd Brahmin Regiment can be seen as representative of the other infantry regiments. Between 1861 and 1913, this unit experienced no summary courts martial.⁵ Between 1872 and 1874, the Madras Army experienced 714 trials, out of which only 10 were summary trials. For the same period, the Punjab Frontier Force witnessed 245 trials, out of which only 8 were summary trials. In these 3 years, the Bengal Army saw 847 trials, out of which 108 were summary trials. Summary trials were more frequent in this force because the experience of Mutiny haunted the Bengal Army. So the military hierarchy was unwilling to take any chances.⁶ Traditional historiography has emphasized the officer-soldier relationship to explain the functioning of the Indian Army.⁷ But because of the decline in the incidence of the summary courts martial, the crux of maintaining discipline lay with the general courts martial,⁸ that is to say with the higher officers rather than with the regimental officers. Hence this chapter focuses on the general courts martial.

as regards discipline, Circular no. 129/N, 29 Sept. 1864, vol. 4, Confidential circulars to officers, 16 May 1865, vol. 5, Adjutant General's circulars, N.A.I.

⁵ Digest of services of the 3rd Brahmin, 1861-1914, N.A.I.

⁶ Minute on the organization of the Indian Army, Ch. 3, Madras Army, para 37, Norman minutes.

⁷ One representative is Jeffrey Greenhut's, 'Sahib and Sepoy: An Inquiry into the Relationships between the British Officers and Native Soldiers of the British Indian Army', *Military Affairs*, vol. XLVIII, no. 1 (1984), pp.15-18.

⁸ Douglas M. Peers in 'Sepoys, Soldiers and the Lash: Race, Caste and Army Discipline in India, 1820-1850', *JICH*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1995), p. 221 writes that summary courts martial was the most common method of disciplining the sepoys. This was not the case for the post 1859 era.

This chapter is divided into 3 sections. Section I charts the imperial policy of making punishments less brutal. The next section brings into focus the various components of the courts martial, which influenced the moderation of punishment. The final section attempts to assess the quantum of criminal activities by the soldiers.

I

Compared with another non-national multiracial forces like the Austro-Hungarian Army,⁹ the Indian Army's penal system was much less severe. This was partly because, unlike the former force, the Indian Army relied on volunteers. In the late Victorian Army punishment became less harsh. Towards the end of the 19th century, a shift occurred in the attitude of the British Army towards its personnel. Instead of being viewed as the 'scum of the earth', the British soldiers were perceived as working men with special skills.¹⁰ And the British in India were probably influenced by this trend. Further, the Indian Army's penal system was influenced by a sort of 'reformist' philosophy. The underlying assumption was that infliction of excessive violence on the soldiers was inimical to discipline in the long run, because the fear of draconian punishment frequently forced the soldiers towards seditious activities. One of the reasons for Stalin's soldiers being crime-prone was because of the inhuman

⁹ Gunther E. Rothenberg, 'The Austrian Army in the Age of Metternich', *Journal of Modern History*, vol.40 (1968), pp.156-61.

¹⁰ H.J. Hanham, 'Religion and Nationality in the Mid Victorian Army', in M.R.D. Foot (ed), *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J.R. Western, 1928-1971* (London, 1973), pp. 170, 174; Edward Spiers, 'The late Victorian Army: 1868-1914', in David Chandler and Ian Beckett (eds), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (Oxford, 1994), p. 192.

punishment system of the Red Army.¹¹ So the British technique of not awarding harsh sentences kept the soldiers on the right track. In early 19th century, the British legal system in India was influenced by 'Liberalism' and Benthamite Utilitarianism. 'Enlightened' legislation was designed to discourage mutilation and corporal punishment.¹² The imperial understanding of indigenous society, and the British perception of the various communities' role in the colonial war machine, moderated the imperial response.

So the 19th century witnessed a gradual humanization of punishment in the Indian Army, even in cases of heinous crimes like combat refusal. Leaving the regimental colours, which represented the unit's pride, was considered a serious crime in the Indian Army. Subadar H. Birjee of the 9th Bombay Infantry Regiment was in charge of carrying the regimental flag. During an action fought by this unit on 7th January 1797, the Subadar threw away the colour and abandoned the field of battle. The general court martial sentenced him to death on August 1797.¹³

With the passage of time, punishment for the same type of crime became moderate, as is evident from another case. On 5 March 1836, a detachment of 2 British officers, 4 Indian officers, and 28 privates from the 14th Madras Infantry

¹¹ John E. Jessup, 'The Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945', in Alan R. Millet and Williamson Murray (eds), *Military Effectiveness: The Second World War*, vol. 3 (Boston, 1988), 263-64.

¹² Radhika Singha, "'Providential Circumstances': The Thuggee Campaign of the 1830s and Legal Innovation', *MAS*, vol. 27(1993), p. 88; Kartik Kalyan Raman, 'Utilitarianism and the Criminal Law in Colonial India: A Study of the Practical Limits of Utilitarian Jurisprudence', *MAS*, vol. 28 (1994), pp. 739-91.

¹³ 9th Bombay Regiment, N.A.I. (This document is unpaginated and the information is organized under different years), 1775, 1797.

Regiment advanced from Oudagerry to Durgepersad pass. When the party was crossing the pass, some Khond tribals attacked. The atmosphere was highly charged. The sepoy immediately opened fire with their muskets. Since the hills were covered with trees, the attacking Khonds did not offer clear targets. They rushed forward with hatchets and engaged in close quarter combat, in which the muskets were useless. Many soldiers fell before the muskets could be reloaded. The British officers died on the spot. The Jemadar in charge of the rearguard then lost heart, and his party melted away. For this dismal performance, the Jemadar was sentenced to transportation for life by the general court martial, and the rest of the rearguard, which consisted of 5 privates, was discharged. Officers were supposed to lead the men in the actions. So the Jemadar's punishment was harsher than the punishment of the privates. It is to be noted that the court martial of 1836, unlike the court assembled in 1797, did not pass any death sentence. Discharge was a serious enough punishment for the Indians, even if it was not so for the British soldiers. The latter were forced to serve in the army and they would have happily accepted dismissal, not as a punishment but as a boon, to escape from the drudgery of military life. But for the 'martial races', dismissal meant social humiliation. The British officers did not look upon the Indian soldiers as the 'scum of the earth'. Many recruits came from families which had provided soldiers generation after generation. Further, army service was a lucrative job for them and their families depended on their wages. Pension was a great attraction, in encouraging the Indians to remain in the army for a long period. Hence dismissal was an attempt by the army to prevent disintegration of the unit during combat. This had a commensurate effect. In 1840, the same 14th Madras Infantry Regiment volunteered for service in China to wipe out its disgrace.¹⁴

¹⁴ Lord W.C. Bentinck was the foremost proponent of the view that dismissal was a social and

The 1857 Mutiny had no effect on the trend of increasing leniency in the awards of the courts martial. When the 23rd Punjab Infantry Regiment was deployed at the northwest frontier post of Chubotra in 1867, the unit expected a night attack by the tribals. On 4th March, sepoy Gulab Singh refused to occupy his position on the rampart. A general court martial sentenced him to 3 months imprisonment.¹⁵ This sentence appears very lenient when compared with the court martial in 1836, which sentenced the soldiers of the 14th Madras Infantry to discharge for the charge of combat refusal. Discharge was considered harsher than temporary imprisonment in the Indian context. Gulab Singh suffered temporary imprisonment, possibly because the British did not find combat refusal by an individual as menacing as collective combat refusal. The authorities knew that it took time and money to train a peasant into a soldier. If soldiers were discharged, the rural society would be full of free-floating armed personnel, who might become a threat to the Raj in the long run. So imprisonment was favoured rather than discharge.¹⁶ Sending soldiers to the prisons for punishment was common in the post Napoleonic French Army.¹⁷ This trend became widespread in the Indian Army probably because the British were influenced by the disciplinary infrastructure of the French military.

economic punishment for those Indians, who joined the army. C.H. Philips (ed), *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck: Governor General of India*, vol. 2, 1832-1835 (Oxford, 1977), no. 802, 16 Feb. 1835, pp.1431-32; 14th Madras Infantry, N.A.I., pp. 87-88, 90.

¹⁵ Simla, 2 July 1867, G.O. N.A.I., pp. 251-52.

¹⁶ *Hancock report*, p. 30.

¹⁷ Paddy Griffith, *Military Thought in the French Army, 1815-1851* (Manchester, 1989), p.99.

One dimension of combat refusal was malingering, and the army's response was imprisonment of the malingerers. There were many old serving soldiers in the Bombay and the Madras armies. They had no incentive to serve beyond 15 years, because their pension remained same for serving between 15 to 40 years. Hence many senior soldiers malingered and feigned disability in the hospital at times of active service. This demoralized even the young soldiers, and had an adverse effect on the army's combat capacity. The summary courts martial sentenced such soldiers to imprisonment upto 12 months.¹⁸

In pre colonial warfare, large-scale collective desertions were common. This was because the pre British armies were friable. They were conglomerates of local leaders and their retainers. Such leaders and their troops often left the service of a prince, and at times were later reemployed by the same prince.¹⁹ But the introduction of a Western style-army by the British ended desertions by whole units. Nevertheless, individual desertions and collective desertions by small bands of soldiers remained. During the first half of the 19th century branding and flogging for desertion in the British Army units deployed in Canada, was replaced by imprisonment.²⁰ Similarly, punishment for desertion also became less severe in the Indian Army. On 5th January 1880, sepoy Sharin of the 20th Punjab Infantry Regiment deserted when his unit was

¹⁸ Minute on the organization of the Indian Army, Ch. 5, Pension system, para 21, 38, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

¹⁹ See the career of an 18th century warlord in William R. Pinch, 'Who was Himmat Bahadur? Gosains, Rajputs and the British in Bundelkhand, ca. 1800', *IESHR*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1998), pp. 293-335.

²⁰ Peter Burroughs, 'Tackling Army Desertion in British North America', *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. LXI (1980), pp.28-68. Burroughs seems to imply that rotting in the prisons was as inhuman as being caned.

deployed in the Kurram valley. He was subsequently caught, and a general court martial at Peshawar sentenced him to transportation for 10 years.²¹ In 1887, 2 sepoys were caught while trying to desert from the 8th Bombay Infantry Regiment and were sentenced to imprisonment for a month.²² Though collective desertion was more dangerous than individual desertion, the penal apparatus acted leniently. The British accepted that it was impolitic to keep the Indians in the war machine against their wishes. The demand for manpower in the Indian Army was very low compared with the huge populace of the subcontinent. There was no shortage of recruits. Hence the Indian Army, unlike the British Army, could afford to introduce the scheme of free discharge. However, voluntary discharge remained rare because, unlike in the British Army, service in the Indian Army was popular. Between 1870 to 1875, only 2.5% of the troops of the Bengal Army and 1.5% of the personnel of the Punjab Frontier Force left of their own accord.²³ In the case of Sharin the army overreacted, possibly because the Afghan War was going on and deserters supplied arms to the frontier tribals.²⁴

In cases of drunkenness, the punishments also became less harsh. In the 19th century, the common form of punishment for being drunk was dismissal. But in the 20th century the general courts martials' sentences became more lenient. Subadar Devi

²¹ Simla, 25 June 1896, G.O. p. 311.

²² 8th Bombay Infantry, N.A.I. (This manuscript is unpaginated and the information is organized under various dates), 2 March 1887.

²³ Minute on the organization of the Indian Army, Ch. Bengal Army, para 64, 66, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

²⁴ T.R. Moreman, 'The Arms trade and the North West Frontier Pathan Tribes, 1890-1914', *JICH*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1994), pp. 195-97, 201-02.

Singh of the 1st Gurkha Light Infantry Regiment was dismissed from service by a general court martial assembled at Buxa in Bhutan on 29th October 1866. This was because he was so drunk that he failed to attend the inspection parade by the British officers on 2nd August 1866.²⁵ When, on 3rd February 1901, Jemadar Beejia of the Malwa Bheel Corps was intoxicated during parade, a general court martial merely suspended him for only a month.²⁶

Abdul Azim Khan, Subadar of the 24th Madras Infantry Regiment at Secunderabad on 22nd May 1899 was so drunk that he failed to attend the commanding officer's inspection parade. The general court martial, instead of dismissing him, merely ordered him to be demoted.²⁷ The imperial belief was the Madrassis were by nature addicted to drink.²⁸ This probably explains the fact that the relaxation of punishment for drunkenness occurred earlier in the Madras units than in the Bombay and the Bengal regiments. Thus discipline became lax in the Madras regiments compared with the Bombay and Bengal regiments, and this contributed significantly to the military ineffectiveness of the Madras forces during the second half of the 19th century.

Douglas M. Peers writes about the early 19th century Madras Army, that the Indian officers were reduced to cyphers by British policy. So, to relieve their

²⁵ Hathras, 27 Nov. 1866, G.O. p. 404.

²⁶ Simla, no. 390, 20 May 1901.G.O.

²⁷ Simla, 26 July 1899,G.O. pp. 390-91.

²⁸ Captain G.L. Fraser, offg. Assistant Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the Govt. of India, Simla, Progs. no. 273, 31 July 1862, M.D.P. Aug. 1862, N.A.I.

boredom, they took to drink. According to Peers, drunkenness was absent among the privates.²⁹ This view holds water for all the regional armies in the post Mutiny era. The Subadars were charged with drunkenness much more often than the privates. For example, Subadar Boota Singh of the 32nd Punjab Infantry Regiment in 1866 and Subadar Baji Rao of the 28th Bombay Infantry Regiment in 1905 were both charged with drunkenness.³⁰ Possibly rabid drunkenness among the Indian officer corps was an example of the 'weapons of the weak'.³¹ The Indian officers were angry because they were denied adequate amounts of power and status in the British controlled Sepoy Army. They realized that if they went for violent rebellion, then they would lose their jobs and probably their lives also. Hence they sabotaged the day to day working of the imperial war machine by not performing their duties properly and getting drunk instead.

Drunkenness was not only inimical to professional efficiency, but was also related to rowdyism. The British officers noted that the Indian officers were exceptionally addicted to liquor and frequently got drunk, which then led to trouble with the European troops. The authorities possibly understood that sheer boredom encouraged the Indian officers to take to drink. Hence, instead of cruelty towards the

²⁹ Douglas M. Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in India, 1819-1835* (London, 1995), p.85.

³⁰ 28th Bombay Regiment, N.A.I. (This manuscript is unpaginated and the information is organized under various year) Aug. 1905; Simla, 22 May 1866, G.O. p. 145.

³¹ For this concept, I am indebted to James C. Scott's, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 29, 31, 33, 36. Of course, Scott confines himself to the peasant stealing the agricultural surplus. Why only peasants? Minor workers in any bureaucratic organization could adopt this form of resistance.

Indian officers who drank, the high command's response was to station guards at the rum godowns to prevent their looting by the brown officers.³²

The British officers represented the principal mechanism of control for harnessing the Indian soldiers who constituted the imperial muscle power. Challenges to the authority of the white officer corps by the brown personnel constituted a serious worry for the imperialists. There were some instances when the Indian privates challenged the British officers, as well as those Indian officers who were in league with the white officers. In the pre 1857 era, the soldiers were allowed to petition the higher authorities if they had trouble with their regimental officers. But after the 1857 catastrophe, the imperialists concluded that the petition system, by weakening the regimental commandants' authority, aided in the disintegration of the command structure. So the petition system was discouraged after 1859.³³

Ram Singh, a Resaldar of the Awadh Military Police, submitted a petition in February 1860, which started: 'Most respectfully sahib, your poor memorialist submits few lines with the hope that his case may be considered and he begs to be pardoned for interrupting your valuable time and patience'. This sort of language was designed not to offend the British sense of superiority. Ram Singh asserted that he was dismissed from service by the British commandant. Ram Singh claimed that just before his dismissal when the Purbiyas of the 1st Punjab Irregular Cavalry were unwilling to serve in China, he was ready to serve overseas. Ram Singh continued that he was in dire straits, as he had no other means to support himself. The military

³² Fraser to the officer commanding Awadh division, Simla, 6 May 1862, M.D.P. Aug. 1862.

³³ *Supplementary report*, pp. 30, 61, 65.

bureaucrats did not punish him for challenging his regimental commandant's order of dismissal.³⁴

At Peshawar in March 1866, a quasi-rebellion occurred. The Major General W.O.G. Haly, commanding the Peshawar division, received an anonymous petition, which contained serious complaints against the regimental commandant of the 24th Punjab Infantry Regiment. The petition was handed over to Haly by the sepoys Lena Singh and Wazir Singh of the same regiment. When they were interrogated, they confessed that Havildar Natha Singh and Naik Gulab Singh were the masterminds behind this affair. A general court martial was held on August 1866 at Peshawar. The Naik was dismissed from service. Why was the Naik punished, unlike Ram Singh? Ram Singh's petition was clothed in humble language, and it was not generated collectively but centered round personal grievances. So it did not constitute a threat to the military hierarchy. Hence the British took no punitive action. Especially just after 1857, when the imperialists were in the process of reestablishing their rule, the British dared not antagonize the petitioners by punishing them. Again, the British were afraid of antagonizing the Indian officer corps as a body. Hence Havildar Natha Singh was allowed to go free.³⁵

Though the Mutiny receded in time, the image of a crucial linkage between rebellion and religion never dimmed in British memory. The imperialists probably remembered that their evangelical policy had turned the Hindus and the Muslims against them in 1857. The British refused to punish the soldiers heavily, on occasions

³⁴ The memorial of Ram Singh, to Major F.D. Atkinson, offg. Secy. to India Govt. Military Department, Fort William, Progs. no.7, Feb.1860, Office memorandum from Atkinson to Singh, Progs. no.8, 3 March 1860. M.D.P. March 1860.

³⁵ Simla, 1 Aug. 1866, G.O. pp. 226-27.

when religion acted as an adhesive for collective grievances. Instead of applying overt pressure, the regimental officers practiced 'divide and rule' on religious lines. Hence a communal split surfaced in the regiments, which prevented the possibility of the Indian troops rising in a combined way against the British. At Hingoli on 4th March 1895 Kote Dufadar Bachan Singh and Dufadar Harnam Singh of the 4th Lancers Hyderabad Contingent instigated 18 sowars of their unit for the release of some of their colleagues who were imprisoned on grounds of indiscipline. The Kote Dufadar and the Dufadar, along with the 18 sowars who had taken an oath to act unitedly, were Hindus, while the Muslim personnel rallied around the Muslim Resaldar Majid Khan, who sided with the British. Still, the British must have suffered from an acute sense of powerlessness. This was clear from the sentence passed by the general court martial. The 18 sowars were not punished at all. The 2 ringleaders got away with light punishment—1 year imprisonment with hard labour.³⁶

The punishment for attempted murder was transportation for life. But in the last decade of the 19th century, the period of transportation was reduced. When sepoy Hira Singh of the 31st Punjab Infantry Regiment tried to shoot dead sepoy Pakar Singh at Malakand on August 1896, Hira Singh was transported for life. Naik Jalal Khan of the 24th Bombay Infantry Regiment tried to kill private Mohaiden and Muhamad Rafiq on 20th January 1899 at Gwadar. The general court martial sentenced Jalal Khan to suffer transportation, not for life, but only for 10 years. Jalal Khan suffered transportation for a lesser period even though his crime was more serious than Hira Singh's was, because while the latter tried to kill only 1 of his colleagues, Jalal Khan

³⁶ R.K. Ray, 'Race, Religion and Realm: The Political Theory of "The Reigning Indian Crusade", 1857', in Mushirul Hasan and Narayani Gupta (eds), *India's Colonial Encounter: Essays in Honour of Eric Stokes* (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 133-77; Simla, para 461, 15 May 1895, G.O. pp. 281-82.

tried to kill 2 privates.³⁷ Whatever little fighting occurred between the Indian privates and the brown officers was due to the transfer of village, caste and clan rivalries to the regiments. Since these did not constitute direct threats to the army, the authorities could afford to relax the punishment system.

II

If troops are punished before their loyalty is secured, they will be disobedient. If not obedient, it is difficult to employ them....Thus command them with civility....and it may be said that victory is certain.

Sun Tzu³⁸

The imperialists' perceived that overdeployment of force would result in the disintegration of the fragile 'mask of command'.³⁹ The British drive for the moderation of punishment was accelerated by a mechanism inbuilt in the army's disciplinary system. The Indian officers were occasionally members and even presidents of the general courts martial. This was probably done to prevent the notion gaining ground among the Indian soldiers that the punishment apparatus was purely a white men's organization. Then the British, by allowing the Indian officers to enjoy some power over the Indian privates, tried to drive a wedge between the brown privates and the brown officers. Nevertheless, while manning the court martial mechanism, the Indian officers were very sympathetic to their brethren. However the British had two trump cards. First, in sensitive cases when the Indian officers'

³⁷ Simla, para 760, 4 Nov. 1896, pp. 668-69, para 371, 1899, pp. 218-19 G.O.

³⁸ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, tr. by Yuan Shibing (Hertfordshire, 1993), p.121.

³⁹ I have borrowed this concept from John Keegan's *The Mask of Command* (1987, reprint, New York, 1988).

sympathies were suspect, British officers were inducted in the courts martial. Secondly, the Commander-in-Chief could order the courts martial to revise their findings. However the Commanders-in-Chief did not always pressurize courts martial for harsher punishments. They occasionally ordered the courts to award lenient punishments, as they themselves were concerned to prevent the slipping of the ever slippery mask of leadership.

There was a case of combat refusal by private Gulab Singh in March 1867. Nevertheless Subadar Mungul Singh who presided over the general court martial was very lenient with Gulab Singh. The latter was merely imprisoned for 3 months. As Mungul Singh and Gulab Singh were from different regiments, this indicates that the Indian officers' sympathy for the brown privates cut across the regimental boundaries. General W.R. Mansfield, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1870-75), asserted that if such guilty soldiers were not punished severely then combat refusal and decomposition of the command structure would become rampant. He continued by saying that Gulab Singh ought to have been awarded capital punishment for his crime. Mansfield did not reject the court martial sentence passed by an Indian officer,⁴⁰ probably to avoid running roughshod over Indian opinion.

Misbehaviour by the Indian officers towards their superior British officers occurred occasionally. Resaldar Rahim Bux Khan of the 19th Bengal Cavalry at Shahdera on 1st February 1870 lost his temper with his British commandant. In front of other Indian officers, Bux Khan behaved insolently with his commandant. Bux continued to shout after being repeatedly ordered by his superiors to remain silent. A general court martial presided over by Resaldar Major Man Singh from the same

⁴⁰ Lieutenant General S.L. Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty First Century* (New Delhi, 1993), p. 534; Simla, 2 July 1867, G.O. pp. 251-52.

regiment merely suspended Bux for 4 months. One wonders whether, if the president was British, Bux Khan would have been in more serious trouble. Mansfield caustically commented that Bux Khan's punishment was unnecessarily lenient but he did not ask the court martial to revise the sentence.⁴¹ This was probably because the specter of Hindu-Muslim unity haunted the British- Bux Khan and Man Singh belonged to different religions.

But the top-most military figure did not always tolerate such leniency on the part of the courts martial if the cases involved direct challenges to the British officers by the brown soldiers. The British officers in charge of the Indian regiments were cowed down if the religious sentiments of the soldiers were involved. They dilly-dallied, especially when Islam was involved. This was probably due to the 'Mutiny mania' which worked at the back of the imperial mind. The officers held the opinion that Islam provided fuel during the 1857 rising. Even among the Raj's civilian officers, the general belief was that the Muslims at best nurtured passive hostility towards the white men's regime and at worse were actively hostile. This was because, ran the British conviction, due to the inherent hostility of Islam towards Christianity. The British were conscious that the growth of their empire in India had displaced the Muslims from the high government posts which they had occupied in the 18th century. Further, the British were nervous because in the second half of the 19th century, the Muslims constituted about 45% of the Indian Army.⁴² A tense situation developed at

⁴¹ Calcutta, 22 March 1870, G.O. p. 96.

⁴² Field Marshal Roberts was a representative of the School, which held the view that the Muslims engineered the Mutiny. Fred Roberts, *Letters Written during the Indian Mutiny* (1923, reprint, New Delhi, 1979), p.30. W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musulmans* (1871, reprint, New Delhi, 1969), pp. 3, 14-16, 21-24, 28-30, 34-35; *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p. 156.

Buxa on 5th November 1865 as the Indian officers and the privates combined to defy the white men's power, and the incident acquired a religious tinge. On that day, a Muslim private of the 31st Infantry Regiment (which was composed of Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs) left his post, while on duty, in order to pray. Captain T.G. Ross ordered the Subadar Major Bhuggah Khan to discipline the private. Bhuggah Khan knew well that the men in that regiment were never supposed to leave their posts for religious purpose during duty. But Bhuggah Khan arrogantly refused to comply with Ross' order. When Ross reported the Subadar Major's behaviour to the regimental commandant Lieutenant Colonel S. Richards, the latter ordered an enquiry. Events reached a breaking point when, during the investigation, Bhuggah Khan shouted repeatedly and obstructed the proceedings of the investigations. So a general court martial was assembled on 30th January 1866. However the British officers moved with trepidation. As the Subadar Major and the private were both Muslims, the imperialists were afraid of antagonizing the regiment's Muslim soldiers' religious sensibilities. The British officers understood that if the private, who was the real culprit, was punished, then the Muslim soldiers of the unit would interpret the British move as an undue interference in matters of faith. Predisposed to believe the worst, the British officers believed that such a move might snowball into a mutiny. So the private was left alone and the Subadar Major was brought under the ambit of the 'secular' charge of showing 'disrespect' to his higher officer. Even then, the court's sentence lacked the killer instinct. Instead of dismissal or imprisonment, Bhuggah Khan was merely suspended for 6 months.⁴³

⁴³ Lieutenant F.G. Cardew, *A Sketch of the Services of the Bengal Native Army to the Year 1895* (1903, reprint, New Delhi, 1973), p. 331; Calcutta, 14 March 1866, G.O.

The 'men on the spot' felt immediate pressure, so the general court martial was lenient to the culprits. But the top echelon of the military bureaucracy which functioned from Calcutta and Simla, far away from the context of local pressure, was unwilling to allow the miscreants to escape so lightly. The president of the court martial, Sibratan Ram, was of the same rank as Bhuggah Khan. Because the president did not outrank the culprit, he probably lacked the moral courage to punish him heavily. Mansfield sensed that though Sibratan Ram was from another unit, he was colluding with Bhuggah Khan. Mansfield argued that the court's sentence was not commensurate with the serious crime committed by Bhuggah Khan, who held the highest rank that could be attained by any Indian. He further commented that if Khan was not seriously punished, then it would set a fatal example and would send shock waves throughout the army. To bring order out of chaos, Mansfield demanded a far more serious punishment. However, to prevent any reaction from the co-religionist Muslim privates of the regiment, Mansfield decided to leave the private alone. Mansfield deliberately retained Sibratan Ram as the president of the court martial, and used him as a shield to absorb direct heat from the Indian privates away from the white officer corps. Under pressure from the highest authority, Sibratan Ram complied and passed a revised sentence on 20th February 1866, stating that Bhuggah Khan was to be dismissed. This was a typical example of Indian officers being used as stooges to award heavy punishment to Indian soldiers. Mansfield tried to use this punishment as a deterrent. To deter further defiance by the Indians, Mansfield converted this punishment into a public spectacle. In March 1866 he ordered that Bhuggah Khan's sentence should be read publicly to every Indian regiment.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ 14 March 1866, G.O.

Conflict also occurred between the regional and the central army commands. A Subadar of the Bombay Army, with 20 years service behind him, was dismissed from service in 1867, for intoxication during duty. However, due to consideration of his past service, the Subadar was granted a pension of Rs 12 per month. The army head quarter was against showing such leniency, and warned the regional commands that in future such unnecessary leniency need not be shown to the 'guilty' soldiers.⁴⁵

Occasionally, lack of unanimity within the general court martial allowed the higher authorities to award heavy punishment. One Resaldar Kunhiya Singh of the 17th Bengal Cavalry was drunk at Barrackpur during the evening parade on 6th February 1868. The president of the court, Subadar Major Munnalal Tiwari, pointed out that the Resaldar deserved pardon, because due to heavy duty he could not get any rest for the previous 3 days. The bonhomie between the Indian officers cut across service rivalry. Tiwari, who belonged to the infantry, sympathized with Kunhiya Singh of the cavalry. However the other members of the court martial did not agree with Tiwari. Since no consensus emerged, and the president was unwilling to accept the majority's decision, Tiwari appealed to the Commander-in-Chief, who took the final decision. Due to the split within the members of the court martial, Mansfield could afford to turn down Tiwari's request, and Kunhiya Singh was discharged.⁴⁶

At times, the Indian personnel attacked British officers physically. The British policy, in such cases of gross indiscipline within a regiment, was to appoint a British officer from another unit, in the hope that he would be free from the pressure generated by the regimental personnel who were facing charges, and their friends

⁴⁵ Statement of cases recorded in the proceedings in which there have been differences in opinion between the supreme government and the Bombay government, 15 Oct. 1867, Norman minutes.

⁴⁶ Simla, 4 May 1868, G.O. pp.155-56.

within the unit. The grievances of the soldiers were frequently directed against both the British, and those Indian officers who were considered lackeys of the sahibs. A sepoy, Bichai Singh of the 4th Bengal Infantry Regiment, hit Major John Swinton Melville and Jemadar Ramadin Singh of the same unit with his rifle in Calcutta on 6th March 1899. The Major was seriously wounded. A court martial was assembled at Fort William on 29th May 1899. The army considered the case to be too serious to be left in the hands of the Indian officers. So Lieutenant Colonel G.G. Monk Mason of the Royal Artillery, instead of an Indian officer, was appointed to preside over the court martial, and he sentenced Bichai Singh to suffer transportation for 7 years. Monk Mason could afford to award a harsh sentence because there was no unified opposition to the white officer corps by the Indians. In fact the Jemadar had tried to save Melville.⁴⁷

There were several cases when a private attacked more than a single Indian officer of the same regiment. This reflected that the privates were angry with those elements of the brown officer's corps, which colluded with the sahibs. On 22nd July 1895, Rifleman Bharajman Rai of the 2nd Battalion 4th Gurkha Rifles at Bakloh shot at Subadar Indarbir Kunwar and Havildar Dalbir Shahi of the same unit with his rifle. The Subadar was seriously wounded and the Havildar died. Then Jhanda Singh of the 10th Bengal Infantry shot dead Subadar Mehtab Singh of his unit on 27th February 1899. The general courts martial hanged Rai and Singh⁴⁸ to prevent the collapse of the imperial auxiliary shield.

⁴⁷ Simla, no. 483, 29 June 1899, G.O. pp. 318-19.

⁴⁸ Simla, 1 Nov. 1895, 15 May 1899, para 363, G.O. pp. 718-19.

The Indian officers frequently misbehaved with the privates. Though such affrays were not direct challenges to the white men's authority, the high command still intervened to prevent the discontent of the privates from taking an anti-establishment colour. In such cases an Indian officer was generally appointed as president of the court martial, to project an image showing that the white men were not overinterested in poking their noses into the internal problems of the Indians. On 29th January 1870, Subadar Shaikh Ali Bux of the Hyderabad Contingent's 5th Infantry Regiment was drunk and assaulted the recruit Peer Bux. Lord Napier, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1870-76), in order to project the view that whenever possible an Indian should judge another 'guilty' Indian, appointed Subadar Major Baderuddin as the president of the general court martial. The court martial suspended Ali Bux for 6 months.⁴⁹

In many cases the Commander-in-Chief played the role of a benevolent angel, especially if the courts martial overstepped their limits. The bottomline was that, except with those Indians who had challenged the British officers, the military hierarchy was ready to be lenient. The high command went out of its way to reduce the punishment of those Indian officers who were charged with neglect of duty, though it adversely affected the military effectiveness of the force. One Jemadar Jenab Shah of the 2nd Punjab Infantry at Bahadurgarh made a false report to his commander on 15th October 1869. He stated in his report that all the regimental camels, which were used for carrying baggage and munitions, were present. The Jemadar knew very well that 2 camels were missing. A general court martial, which was presided over by Subadar Major Habib Khan, suspended Jenab Shah for 6

⁴⁹ Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p. 534; Simla, 25 May 1870, G.O. p. 226.

months. Though Jenab Shah's crime was less serious than that of Resaldar Rahim Bux, who misbehaved with his British officer in February 1870, Bux got away with lighter punishment. While Bux was served an order of suspension for 4 months by Resaldar Major Man Singh's court, Jenab Shah was suspended for 6 months. This was despite the fact that Jenab Shah's service record was much better than Rahim Bux. Why did this happen? Perhaps either Man Singh shared with his colleague Rahim Bux, a sort of disaffection against the British who had monopolized most of the power and privileges for themselves, or Habib Khan had a personal vendetta against Jenab Shah. Anyway, Mansfield noticed this contradiction. So he revoked the suspension order.⁵⁰

A case of a senior officer, who was above the officer presiding over a court martial, but acquiesced to the soldiers' pressure, occurred even when the army was in the midst of a war. When the Second Afghan War was going on, a Punjabi Muslim sepoy named Sharin of the 20th Punjab Regiment deployed in the Kurram valley deserted on 5th January 1880. The crime was doubly serious because the soldier deserted, with his rifle, when the army was engaged in battle. The man was caught and brought to trial before a general court martial. He was sentenced to suffer transportation for 10 years. The Punjabi Muslims constituted a sizeable chunk of the Raj's force. By 1885, they constituted about 6.7% of the Indian Army. They numbered 8799 men. Major General C.J. Morsoon commanding the Punjab forces reduced the term to 8 years,⁵¹ probably in a goodwill gesture, not to alienate the Punjabi Muslim community.

⁵⁰ Calcutta, 22 March 1870, 26 March 1870, G.O. pp. 96, 115-16.

⁵¹ Simla, 25 June 1896, G.O. p. 311; *Army committee*, vol. 1-A, *Minority report*, p.156.

Even during peace, the Raj's punishment apparatus buckled due to pressure from below. The army gave way to the troops' demand for redressal, especially just after 1857, when the British were still suffering from the 'Mutiny shock'. In 1857, when the Bengal Army mutinied, about 100,000 soldiers rebelled. Only a few fought for the Raj. Some soldiers were disarmed and the rest deserted or just went to their villages and sat tight waiting and watching.⁵² Among this group of fence-sitters, a considerable number were dismissed and discharged from various regiments by their commandants, on grounds of their dubious loyalty. After the imperial victory many such characters turned up claiming 'justice'. The Raj lacked the will to turn everybody down as the rebellion was just over. And in such cases, the higher authorities overrode the decisions of the summary courts martial.

One Mohais Singh, an ex-soldier of the 29th Bengal Infantry Regiment, which rebelled in 1857, turned up in 1860 to challenge his dismissal. He claimed that during 1857 he was at Ambala depot, and when ordered by the British commandant to prove his loyalty by firing the greased cartridges, he fired from his Enfield rifle. This news reached his unit, then stationed at Moradabad. When Mohais Singh joined his unit, his Purbiya colleagues raised a hue and cry, saying that Mohais had become an outcaste as he had handled the impure cartridges, and was hence unacceptable to the regiment. In an attempt to defuse tension, Captain Hoeist of his regiment ordered Mohais Singh to take leave from 20th May till 31st July 1857. As the temper of the Purbiyas rose and the Mutiny spread, Hoeist renewed Mohais' leave for another 4 months. But Mohais claimed that when he presented himself at Benares in 1858, the Brigadier in charge there dismissed him. Mohais recounted that he had served the Raj with loyalty for 19

⁵² P.J.O. Taylor, *What Really Happened During the Mutiny: A Day to Day Account of the Major Events of 1857-1859 in India* (New Delhi, 1997), p. 31.

years but was unduly punished for others' guilt. He demanded to be reinducted in the army. The soldiers joined with a sense of contract of continuous service. Breach of this contract would have resulted in the loss of faith of thousands of the Raj's soldiers, resulting in the weakening of the loyalty bonds. This the army could not afford. Moreover Singh had been thrown out by a summary order. The higher authorities regretted that British officers often behaved as despots, which in turn angered the soldiers. So they reopened this case. Captain L. Fraddy, the late commandant of Mohais Singh, acknowledged that, though a Brahmin, he behaved properly at Ambala and he remained in his village when his regiment mutinied in June 1857. Major E. Crompton, who was at Benares, ascertained that Mohais was in his village Moorlichpura in Ballia parganah of Ghazipur province during the Mutiny. Satisfied with the enquiry, the Commander-in-Chief ordered the restoration of Mohais Singh in the army without forfeiture of his former period of service.⁵³

Occasionally the 'guilty' soldiers enjoyed the benefit of doubt. Naib Rissaldar Sadat Ali Khan of the 18th Irregular Cavalry was on sick leave when the 'devil's wind' blew. He rejoined his unit only on 23rd January 1859. What raised the eyebrows of his commandant, Major W.H. Ryves, was that the duration of the Rissaldar's sick leave extended from 8th April 1857 to 7th November of the same year. What was Khan doing after that date till January 1859? Khan claimed that he was at his home at Rampur and during the Mutiny he had tried to contact the British. Khan demanded his arrears of pay- Rs 361. Ryves deduced that Khan was at best a passive, and not an

⁵³ This case shows that the feedback apparatus of the Raj reached to the lower levels of the Indian society. So the Raj was anything but a Night Watchman State. Petition of Mohais Singh, sepoy of the 3rd Company of 29th Bengal Infantry Regiment, to the Commander-in-Chief, Calcutta, Progs. no. 113, 18 Nov. 1859, Major H.K. Burne, offg. Deputy Secy. to the India Govt. Military department, to the offg. Assistant Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. no. 114, 3 March 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

active supporter of the Raj. Instead of coming forward and risking life and limb to aid the white men in a time of trouble, Khan spent his time comfortably with his family. At this critical juncture, Ryves' superior, the Adjutant General Lieutenant Colonel W. Mayhew, came to Khan's rescue. The Adjutant General was afraid that the arbitrary behaviour of the regimental commandants would alienate the Indian personnel. Mayhew asserted that Khan's argument that he tried to contact Ryves several times could not be disproved. The Adjutant General ultimately restored Khan to his former position in his old unit and released his arrears.⁵⁴

III

The trend towards moderation was further intensified by the British success in limiting the quantum of crime. The British policy of awarding moderate punishment prevented the discontent of the Indian soldiers from reaching a certain threshold and thus the army experienced a low level of crime. This becomes evident when one takes a micro and the macro view of the crime graph.

The 14th Madras Infantry Regiment can be taken as a microcosm of the infantry regiments. In its long history of more than a century, there was only a single case of desertion, and this occurred in 1893.⁵⁵ From table 11 it is clear that on a macro perspective, desertion remained very low in the Indian Army. Compared with other

⁵⁴ From Lieutenant Colonel W. Mayhew, Adjutant General, Dabepore, Major F.D. Atkinson, offg. Secy. to the India Govt., Military department, to the Adjutant General, Fort William, Progs. nos. 252-53, 10 Feb. 1860, 8 March 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

⁵⁵ 14th Madras Infantry, p.36.

armies, like the American forces during the Civil War,⁵⁶ and the Red Army during the Bolshevik takeover,⁵⁷ desertions in the Indian Army remained very low.

Desertions were miniscule in the Madras infantry regiments, because the privates were allowed to keep their wives with the regiments. The regimental lines became their homes and they had no other place to go. Moreover, many of the Madrassi and Gurkha soldiers sons' got jobs in their fathers' units. The Victorian British Army believed that if the soldiers were allowed to keep their families with the regiments, then they would not get drunk and undisciplined. This strand of thought probably influenced the military authorities of British India also. Further, the Indian soldiers' families in the regimental lines functioned as imperial hostages; a security for the 'proper' behaviour on part of the soldiers. In the Bengal Army and in the Punjab Frontier Force, north Indians, Punjabis and the frontier tribes were inducted. In 1875, these two forces had around 9,000 Gurkhas, 22,000 north Indians, 19,000 Punjabis, and 5,000 frontier tribals. In the British perception the last two groups were 'wild' natured. How were the authorities still able to check desertions? Military service was an honourable profession. Generally, small peasant families owning 4 bullocks and 60 acres of land supplied personnel to the Raj's military. The small peasants from Punjab and the Ganga-Yamuna doab generally joined the army to tide

⁵⁶ This analogy is partly true because the Civil War American armies were a sort of militia while the Indian Army was composed of long-service volunteers. Further, the American armies suffered from logistical breakdown and high rate of casualties. These two factors encouraged desertion. On the other hand it could be argued that while the Americans were motivated by nationalism, the Indian Army personnel were quasi-mercenaries. Brian Holden Reid and John White, "A Mob of Stragglers and Cowards": Desertion from the Union and Confederate Armies', *JSS*, vol. 8 (1985), pp.64-66, 75; Theodore Ayrault Dodge, *Alexander* (1890, reprint, New York, 1996), pp. 246-48, 680.

⁵⁷ Orlando Figes, 'The Red Army and Mass Mobilization during the Russian Civil War', *Past and Present*, no. 129 (1990), pp. 168-211.

over unfavourable harvests. During harvest times, when the troops' farms needed extra hands, they demanded to go to their villages. So the army introduced the scheme of furlough. Each soldier got furlough of about 3 months every year, when they visited their families in the villages. For the frontier tribals', pay and pension was a vital source of tribal income, especially in the context of a rising population and diminishing economic base. Their population reached 1.6 million by 1911. Between 1879 and 1915, the number of tribals in the Indian Army increased from 2,000 to 7,500. Since the Gurkhas had left Nepal along with their families because there were no jobs, there could not be any question of their leaving the army.⁵⁸

Desertion was minute in the cavalry regiments, because the landed gentry used to join these units along with their retainers, for social prestige. They bought their own horses and, for security, they had to deposit money with the government. If they misbehaved, or were discharged, then they lost their security money.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Myna Trustring, *Women Of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 68-89; R. O. Christensen, 'Tribesmen, Government and Political Economy on the North West Frontier', in Clive Dewey (ed), *Arrested Development in India: The Historical Dimension* (New Delhi, 1988), pp.179-80; *Army Regulations India*, vol. 2, *Regulations and Orders for the Army*, (Calcutta, 1913), pp. 44-45; Major A.H. Bingley, *Handbooks for the Indian Army: Sikhs* (1899, reprint, Chandigarh, 1970), pp. 120, 138; idem., *History, Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujars* (1899, reprint, New Delhi, 1976), p. 42; Major R.M. Betham, *Handbooks for the Indian Army: Marathas and Dekhani Musulmans* (Calcutta, 1908), p. 89; Captain Eden Vansittart, *The Gurkhas* (1890, reprint, New Delhi, 1980), pp. 37-38; idem., *Notes on Nepal* (1896, reprint, New Delhi, 1992), p. 115; Colonel L.W. Shakespear, *History of the 2nd King Edward's Own Goorkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles)*, vol. I (Aldershot, 1912), pp. 30, 58, 179; Minute on the organization of army in India, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, composition and organization of the regiments, para 5-6, 9-10, general conditions, para 66, Ch.3, Madras Army, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes; 14th Madras Infantry, p119.

⁵⁹ Scinde Horse, Brigadier Park's report, Bairseah, 11 Oct. 1859, M.D.P. March 1860.

Table 11: Desertions of the Indian Army Personnel stationed within India (1870-75)

Army	Number of Deserters	Number of Deserters per Regiment per Year	% of Strength
Bengal Army		3.5 Men (Infantry and Cavalry Regiments taken together) ; 2 Men in Cavalry Regiment	.5
Punjab Frontier Force		3 Men in Infantry Regiment	.25
Madras Army	286	1.3 Men (Infantry and Cavalry Regiments taken together)	.5
Bombay Army	532	3 Men (Average of the Infantry and the Cavalry Regiments)	.42

Source: Minute on the organization of the army in India, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, general conditions, para 60, 63, Ch. 3, Madras Army, para 36-38, Ch. 4, Bombay Army, general remarks on the organization, para 19-20, 11 Oct 1875, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

Fragging meant killing or maiming officers by the privates. It was common in the American Army in Vietnam.⁶⁰ This phenomenon was present in the Indian Army, but the quantum of fragging was miniscule. In the 3rd Cavalry Regiment of the Hyderabad Contingent in 1828, a group of soldiers murdered Captain Tucker of that unit during parade. The culprits were never caught. This instance occurred probably because the officer had a personal problem with the men. The murder did not reflect an anti-British attitude on part of the sowars, because they remained loyal during 1857, and fought doggedly against the rebels. No other case of fragging was reported from this unit.⁶¹ In the 125 years of 8th Bombay Infantry Regiment's history, there was only a single case, which occurred in 1885, of serious misbehaviour with a British officer.⁶² Occasionally the Indian soldiers misbehaved with the sahibs, and some of the cases were discussed above in section II. The relationship between the white officers and the brown soldiers represented a crucial interface between the colonizers and the colonized. The above cases should force us to revise the picture of a romanticized father-son relationship between the sahibs and the sepoys, as drawn by Philip Mason.⁶³

Some discontent was inbuilt between the white officers and the brown privates. But from table 12 it is clear that on the whole, the number of men tried by

⁶⁰ Guenter Lewy, 'The American Experience in Vietnam', in Sam C. Sarkesian (ed), *Combat Effectiveness: Cohesion, Stress and the Volunteer Military* (Beverly Hills, 1980), pp. 94, 96-98.

⁶¹ Digest of Services 3rd Regiment Hyderabad Contingent Cavalry, N.A.I. (This manuscript is unpaginated and the information is organized under the heading of various years), 4 Nov. 1888,

⁶² 8th Bombay Infantry.

⁶³ Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (1974, reprint, DehraDun, 1988), pp.321, 324, 371-92.

the courts martial remained marginal compared with the size of the army. How were the British able to prevent the escalation of any sahib-sepoy antagonism? The higher level of the military hierarchy understood that, at times, the fault for starting such affrays lay with the British officers. So when any sahibs misbehaved with any brown privates, even without the latter complaining about it, the high command took action. One Lieutenant Colonel Stanley of the Bombay Army in 1867 misbehaved with a soldier during parade. For 'lack of self control', the officer was immediately removed from his position.⁶⁴

Regimental commandants were occasionally allowed to resort to summary courts martial for dismissing Indians who had defied the white officers' authority. However, table 13 shows that the number of soldiers discharged by both the general and summary courts martial, remained small. Moreover, when Indian officers were discharged by the summary courts martial, then other brown officers were promoted, which cooled discontent. Subadar Moraree Satun of the 8th Bombay Infantry Regiment was dismissed from service for 'misconduct' on 30th January 1885. In this case the Indian officers' anger did not coalesce, probably because their chances of promotion brightened. Generally, few soldiers aspired to become Naiks after 20 years of service. Very few soldiers became Havildars after 24 years of service if not already invalided. To assuage the feelings of the Indian officer corps, the commandant immediately promoted Jemadar Parasarum Jadow into Satun's slot and Havildar M. Landay became Jemadar in Jadow's place.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Statement of cases recorded in the proceedings, case no. 6, 5 Oct. 1867, Norman minutes.

⁶⁵ 8th Bombay Infantry, 30 Jan. 1885; Lieutenant Colonel H.W.Norman, Deputy Adjutant General, to the Secy. to the India Govt., Military department, Calcutta, Progs. no. 103, 26 July 1861, M.D.P. Oct. 1861.

It is observed that the soldiers' respect for their officers increased if the latter happened to be the formers' social superiors.⁶⁶ For this reason, the British tried to utilize the clan leaders' natural leadership over their followers, while building the cavalry regiments. This policy probably reduced the quantum of misbehaviour by the sowars towards their Indian officers. The clan leaders were encouraged to join the units with their relatives. When the 1st Punjab Cavalry was raised at Peshawar in 1849, Jai Singh, Nihal Singh and Mehtul Singh from Lahore joined with 30 of their Pathan followers. The British, by the technique of commissioning the clan leaders as officers over their retainers, attempted to continue the patron-client relationship between the Indian elite and the indigenous recruits. This was vital because this was a mixed regiment consisting of 150 Pathans (organized in 2 troops), 100 Sikhs and 280 Hindustanis. The clan leaders were men of property and influence in their own localities. The imperial assumption was that the retainers were eager to obey because they already knew their 'natural' leaders and were confident that their chiefs, as officers, would look after their interests within the regiments. So, for controlling the Pathan sowars, the British made 5 of their clan leaders into commissioned officers, and another 6 were inducted as non-commissioned officers.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Paul L. Savage and Richard A. Gabriel, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the United States Army* (1978, reprint, New Delhi, 1986), p. 36.

⁶⁷ Anon, *History of the 1st Punjab Cavalry* (Lahore, 1887), pp.1-3.

Table 12
Trials by Courts Martial of the Indian Army Personnel stationed within India
(1870-75)

Army	Numbers of Men tried by Courts** Martial	Number of Men tried per Regiment per Year	% of Strength	Size
Bengal Army	1313	4	0.6	The Bengal Army's size was the biggest.*
Punjab Frontier Force	318	3.5	0.5	
Madras Army	1168	5	0.75	30,000
Bombay Army	1557	8	1.25	22,000

Source: Confidential memorandum on the army, Minute on the organization of the army in India, Ch.2, Bengal Army, Ch. 3, Madras Army, Ch. 4, Bombay Army, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

*The combined size of the Bengal Army and the Punjab Frontier Force was 56,000.

**Includes Summary, Regimental and General Courts Martial

Table 13

Volume of Dismissal of the Indian Army personnel Stationed within India (1870-75)

Army	Number of Men Dismissed by General Summary Courts Martial	Number of Men Dismissed by Regiment (Average of Infantry and Cavalry Regiments)/Year	% of Strength
Bengal Army	1313	4	.6
Punjab Frontier Force	318	4.5	.5
Madras Army	482	2	
Bombay Army	730	4	.58

Source: Minute on the organization of the Indian Army, Ch. 2, Bengal Army, General conditions, para 60, 63, Ch. 4, Bombay Army, General remarks, para 19, Norman minutes, N.A.I.

Affrays between the sepoys and the Indian officers were more common than between the sepoys and their British officers. This was due to the imperial attempt to use the Indian officers as a human shield to punish the privates. Further, the British officers, compared with the Indian officers, had more power and status, and could offer the privates far more career incentives and punishment.⁶⁸ So the Indian privates had reasons to keep the British officers in good humour. The Indian officers' interaction with the brown privates was also far more frequent. So the former got more opportunity to exercise petty power over the privates. In general, the privates flouted the Indian officers' authority frequently, because most of the officers were promoted from the ranks. As they were not superior to the common soldier either socially or educationally, the latter failed to give respect to the brown officers.⁶⁹ The occasional purchase of the privates' wives by the Indian officers heightened the tension between them and the privates. One such case occurred in the 11th Punjab Infantry Regiment, when Subadar Pritam Singh bought Rukmini, wife of sepoy Ramdas, in January 1860. To prevent the escalation of tension, Lord Clyde, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1857-1860), had the Subadar arrested.⁷⁰ Finally, the Indian privates remained a more or less cohesive body due to the absence

⁶⁸ *Army Regulations*, pp. 2-3, 10, 89, 119; *1st Punjab Cavalry*, Appendix no. 3, V, p. 41.

⁶⁹ Minute on the organization of the Indian Army, Ch. 3, Madras Army, para 25, 28, 11 Oct. 1875, Norman minutes.

⁷⁰ Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p. 534; From Fraser, Simla, Progs. no. 37, 25 Jan. 1860, M.D.P. March 1860.

of negative practices like *dyedovschina* (ill-treatment of new soldiers by the veterans).⁷¹ This cohesiveness enabled them to act unitedly against the brown officers.

In general, the extent of disobedience in the Indian Army remained low because of absence of mass battle casualties, and the absence of mass conscription.⁷² Political motives were absent in the 'crimes' committed by the troops. This was because the vernacular media and the Congress were not interested in spreading sedition among the troops.⁷³ The soldiers' dissent was shaped by their service considerations, and circumscribed by the regimental institution. Even in the pre 1857 era, the mutinies aimed at the improvement of service conditions. Only in 1857 did the soldiers' grievances snowball into political dissent.⁷⁴ This reflects the military institution's success in separating its personnel from their society. So the traditional interpretation, that the sepoys were merely peasants in uniform, needs to be revised.⁷⁵

⁷¹ *Dyedovschina* is common in the Russian Army. Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven, 1998), pp. 290, 292.

⁷² Conscription in Europe created a distaste for military service among the Europeans. As a result mostly the economically marginal groups were forced to join the armies. Nuria Sales De Bohigas, 'Some Opinions on Exemption from Military Service in Nineteenth Century Europe', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 10 (1967-68), pp. 261-89.

⁷³ Both the Russian and the British armies experienced a high level of indiscipline during the First World War due to heavy casualties and political messages spread by the political parties and the newspapers. David Englander and James Osborne, 'Jack, Tommy, and Henry Dubb: The Armed Forces and the Working Class', *Historical Journal*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1978), pp. 593-606; Marc Ferro, 'The Russian Soldier in 1917: Undisciplined, Patriotic, and Revolutionary', *Slavic Review*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1971), pp. 483-511.

⁷⁴ T. A. Heathcote, *The Military in British India: The Development of British Land Forces in South Asia, 1600 – 1947* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 77-79.

⁷⁵ For the sepoy-peasant continuum see Rudrangshu Mukherjee, 'The Sepoy Mutinies Revisited', in Hasan and Gupta (eds), *India's Colonial Encounter*, p. 130. S.P. Rosen states that the British attempt to

Conclusion

Between the pre colonial and the colonial period, the whole logic of constructing military organizations changed. The types of crimes committed by the soldiers, and the punishment meted out to them, were transformed. The princely militaries were clannish and the clan leaders were responsible for the discipline of their followers. Military families enjoying taxation rights had the responsibility of raising troops and administering them. They changed sides, along with their retainers, in accordance with the demands of local politics.⁷⁶ But the colonial army was run mostly on an impersonal basis. The military jobbers were eliminated. So the system of chiefs standing as guarantors was done away with. If the troops were indisciplined, then the army punished them directly. Not the local warlords, but only the military bureaucracy, had the legitimacy to punish the armed personnel. So, in the British period, the state monopolized its hold over the army's penal system. The central government's control over the management of violence increased.

If one takes a long duree view of South Asian history, then the changes in the nature of crime committed by the soldiers become clear. To realize their arrears of pay, Maratha troops held *dharnas* in front of their chiefs, and denied them food and drink.⁷⁷ In the British-Indian Army, this sort of action was unnecessary, because pay

separate the sepoys from the agrarian society resulted in the 1857 Mutiny. So, in the post Mutiny period, the imperial attempt was to integrate the army with India's social structure, and this explains absence of mutinies in that period. *idem*, *Societies and Military Power: India and its Armies* (New Delhi, 1996).

⁷⁶ S. Inayat A. Zaidi, 'Rozindar Troopers under Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur (A.D. 1700-1743)', *Indian Historical Review*, vol. 10 (1983-84), pp.45-65; Stewart Gordon, 'The Limited Adoption of European-Style Military Forces by Eighteenth Century Rulers in India', *IESHR*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1998) pp. 233-45.

⁷⁷ S. N. Sen, *The Military System of the Marathas* (1928; reprint, Calcutta, 1979), pp. 137-38.

became regular. To a certain extent, the British period was not only a break with the pre colonial period, but also represented some sort of 'modernity'. In the Khalsa Army, the punishments were generally amputation of limbs etc.⁷⁸ Then, in the Mughal and the Ahom forces, the punishment for desertion was impalement or beheading.⁷⁹ Such barbarism was on its way out in the colonial army, where the common forms of punishment were suspensions, imprisonments and dismissals. This trend was consonant with the movement in the Western societies toward greater leniency in military punishment.⁸⁰

As the British response towards the indisciplinary acts of their colonial soldiers became bureaucratic and moderate, the Indian Army could be categorized as a professional institution. The colonial Indian Army and the metropolitan armies did not represent two opposite poles. While the Indian Army had some colonial specificity (like the use of the Indian officer corps as an imperial shield), it also shared certain similarities with the British Army, especially as regards the gradual moderation of punishment. Nor can all the colonial armies be bracketed together because, compared with the other British colonial armies like their African forces,⁸¹ the penal system of the Indian Army was much more humane.

⁷⁸ Fauja Singh Bajwa, *Military System of the Sikhs during the period 1799-1849* (New Delhi, 1964), pp.152-53.

⁷⁹ J.N. Sarkar, *The Art of War in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 76, 89.

⁸⁰ Elihu Rose, 'The Anatomy of Mutiny', *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 8 (1982), p.571.

⁸¹ For the brutal punishments in the African colonial military see, David Killingray, "'The Rod of Empire': The Debate over Corporal Punishment in the British African Colonial Forces", *Journal of African History*, vol.35 (1994), pp.201-16.

The penal tradition of the Indian Army was characterized neither by Foucaultian nor by Wagnerian drama.⁸² Rudrangshu Mukherjee's argument, that the sahib-sepoy relationship was characterized by overt violence,⁸³ applies only for the period between 1857 to 1859. The Mutiny was an aberration. Otherwise crimes were related with mundane, day to day activities, and punishment remained a low-key affair. The Mutiny probably taught the British that the best way to manage the colonial army was not to overreact. In her monograph, Seema Alavi writes that the tightening of the Company's control over the Bengal Army resulted in the 1857 uprising.⁸⁴ The pendulum swung in the opposite direction in the latter half of the 19th century. In the final analysis, the British Indian Army, the chief component of colonialism, operated not so much on the basis of coercion but substantially on the basis of consensus.

⁸² For the horrifying penal system of the *Wehrmacht* see Manfred Messerschmidt, 'German Military Law in the Second World War', in Wilhelm Deist (ed), *The German Military in the Age of Total War* (Leamington Spa, 1985), pp.323-35.

⁸³ Rudrangshu Mukherjee, "'Satan Let Loose Upon Earth': The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857", *Past and Present*, no.128 (1990), pp.92-117.

⁸⁴ Seema Alavi, *The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 292-302.

Conclusion

If we know how to fight, if we know how to conquer, there is not much more wanted; to combine successful results is easy, because it is merely an affair of a well practised judgement,...All that is essential in the few principles which there are, and which depend chiefly on the constitution of States and Armies...

Clausewitz's Summary of Instructions to the Crown Prince¹

Faced with the enormous manpower reserves of South Asia and its cultural, linguistic and religious heterogeneity, the army had to chalk out a strategy for selecting groups for enlistment. This resulted in the Martial Race theory. However, ideological opposition and power politics gave birth to an opposite body of ideas: the Anti-Martial Race theory. While the Martial Race ideology at times appeared like a grand theory, having connections with other ideologies operating in the West, the perspective of the Anti-Martial Race ideology was narrow and its origin was local. Thus the recruitment policy was the product of a continuous dialectic between the two opposing ideologies.

Besides enlistment, the army was concerned with conditioning the recruits, so that they would remain in the military machine and fight for the Raj. A mixture of coercion and welfare, which included both symbolic elements and material incentives, solved the problem. Neither the quantum of coercion nor the amount of perquisites delivered had to be overwhelming, because there were no other potential employers left in the subcontinent, to whom the sepoys and the sowars could turn for employment. The Indian economy was backward. So there were no competing civilian sectors which could attract the recruits away from a long-term volunteer

¹ Colonel F.N. Maude (ed), Von Clausewitz, *On War*, tr. by Col. J.J. Graham, vol. 3 (London, 1968), p. 209.

military force.² The imperial techniques which transformed the rural recruits into disciplined and obedient soldiers were the court martial mechanism, the regimental fabric and the welfare bureaucracy. The end result was the construction of a bureaucratic standing army.

Did this involve a Military Revolution in India? Did India experience any other Military Revolutions before the Company's intervention? Textbooks have often analyzed Indian history on the basis of rise and fall of empires. Many have divided Indian history into three neat categories- ancient, medieval and modern.³ A new scheme which could explain better the role of power politics and state formation is the 'Military Synthesis' model. Military Synthesis stands for a complex amalgam of foreign revolutionary military inputs with indigenous military elements. The Indian context made imported revolutionary institutions inadequate for the military domination of the subcontinent. Hence a balance between innovative foreign technologies and primordial elements in the Indian society was necessary.

The subcontinent experienced 3 Military Syntheses which changed the course of Indian history. A Military Revolution occurred in the Near East about 3000 years ago. It involved the use of horse drawn war chariots.⁴ This weapon platform enabled the Aryans to invade Hindustan in about 1000 BC. However they integrated this revolutionary weapon with indigenous military techniques- infantry, cavalry armed

² The post 1947 American Army failed to attract volunteers of proper quality in adequate numbers due to the existence of competing civilian occupations. David R. Segal et. al., 'The Changing American Soldiers: Work Related Attitudes of U.S. Army Personnel in World War II and the 1970s', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 85, no. 1 (1979), pp. 95-108.

³ One representative is R.C. Majumdar et. al., *An Advanced History of India* (1946, reprint, Madras, 1991).

⁴ John Keegan, *War and Our World: The Reith Lectures 1998* (1998, reprint, London, 1999), p. 29.

with swords, and elephants. Thus emerged the *Chaturanga* armies of the Mauryas and the Guptas.⁵

Another Military Revolution which involved the introduction of horse archery occurred between 600 AD-1600 AD. The horse archers threatened all the agrarian civilizations of the world. The men on horseback were able to dislocate the foot slogging infantry armies of the agrarian states by altering the 'speed of battle'. The element of surprise and mobility provided by horse archery enabled the Inner Asian nomads to dominate the north Indian plain by destroying the *Chaturanga* forces. But India did not possess the huge grasslands necessary for grazing the Central Asian steppe horses. Moreover, the nomadic warriors gradually merged with the settled agrarian populace. Thus Indian ecology and the existence of numerous forts forced the *Badshahs* to integrate their horse archers with infantry, siege cannons and elephantry. Thus the Sultanate and the Mughal period witnessed a transition from an Empire on Horseback towards a rudimentary Gunpowder Empire.⁶

Between 1600 and 1800, northwest Europe experienced a Military Revolution arising from infantry equipped with hand-held firearms, supported by mobile field

⁵ P.C. Chakravarty, *The Art of War in Ancient India* (1941, reprint, New Delhi, 1989), pp. 15-57, 76-125, 181-97; V.R.R. Dikshitar, *War in Ancient India* (1944, reprint, New Delhi, 1987), pp. 157-66.

⁶ David Nicolle, 'Medieval Warfare: The Unfriendly Interface', *JMH*, vol. 63, no. 3 (1999), p. 581; R.P. Lindner, 'Nomadism, Horses and Huns', *Past and Present*, no. 92 (1981), pp. 3-19; Greg S. Rogers, 'An Examination of Historians Explanations for the Mongol Withdrawal from East Central Europe', *East European Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1996), pp. 3-26; J.D. Latham, 'Notes on Mamluk Horse Archers', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 32 (1969), pp. 257-67; A. Jan Qaisar, 'Horsehoeing in Mughal India', *Indian Journal of History of Science*, vol. 27, no. 2 (1992), pp. 133-44; Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Art of War in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 33-89, 93-142, 273-331; S.K. Bakhari, *Indian Warfare: An Appraisal of Strategy and Tactics of War in Early Medieval Period* (New Delhi, 1991); Douglas E. Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi, 1989).

artillery.⁷ The British imported this lethal combination into South Asia. However the South Asian demography, economy and geography resulted in several changes. Instead of the underemployed urban proletariat on which the European infantry forces mainly depended,⁸ the British led Sepoy Army had to depend on the peasants. This resulted in the evolution of elaborate recruitment ideologies. Also, the Company was forced to tune its military machine to the demands of the agrarian scenario: For example, furlough was given at harvest time.

In early modern European warfare, the light cavalry had become useless, due to the rise of the volley firing technique by the infantry. But in India the lack of light cavalry hampered the Company's war making capacity. The heavy European cavalry that the Company brought with it was geared for shock actions. But for reconnaissance, foraging and screening, the British needed light cavalry.⁹ Further, the

⁷ One School challenges the concept of Military Revolution. This School argues that a series of incremental military innovations occurred from 1400 onwards and the slow development of military techniques continued even after 1800. Hence Jeremy Black argues for using the concept of Military Evolution. In response, Clifford J. Rogers has come up with the concept of successive Military Revolutions. The Infantry Revolution occurred between 1420-1440 and then came the Artillery Revolution etc. To my mind if one takes the long *duree* perspective then the concept of Military Revolution could be maintained especially if we consider the decisive effect which Western arms had on Asia between 1700-1900. Jeremy Black *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society, 1500-1800* (London, 1981); Geoffrey Parker, 'In Defence of *The Military Revolution*', and Clifford J. Rogers, 'The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years War', in Rogers (ed), *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (Colorado and Boulder, 1995), pp. 55-93, 337-65.

⁸ David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922', in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey (eds), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 380-81; V.G. Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse* (Bungay, Suffolk, 1982), p. 15.

⁹ Pradeep Barua, 'Military Developments in India, 1750-1850', *JMH*, vol. 58, no. 4 (1994), pp. 599-616; G.J. Bryant, 'The Cavalry Problem in the Early British Indian Army, 1750-1785', *War in History*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1995), pp. 1-21; Idem., 'The Military Imperative in Early British Expansion in India,

vast theatre of military operations in India made it necessary for the combatants to maintain light cavalry.¹⁰ And a light cavalry made up of Indians was best. So the Raj was forced to raise sowars on the Indian model, through the Silladari system. In the final analysis, the British were able to rule India not merely through the Western modelled infantry, but because they were able to construct a hybrid military machine, by balancing institutions from the East and the West.¹¹

What effect did this process have on the construction of the British-Indian State? In an essay, C. Bayly, influenced by John Brewer's categorization of the early modern British state as a Fiscal-Military State, asserts that Britain's Indian empire was also a Fiscal-Military State. Bayly then goes on to analyze the innovative revenue administration which sustained the British-Indian polity.¹² However, he neglects the role of the semi-professional army which maintained this state and was also one of the

1750-1785', *Indo-British Review*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1996), pp. 18-35. For the military importance of the northwestern horse trade and British failure to tap it see Jos Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, c. 1710-1780* (Leiden, 1995).

¹⁰ For the idea that the vast distances resulted in stretching the Asian war machines to the maximum, which in turn made the employment of cavalry necessary, see Jeremy Black, 'War and the World, 1450-2000', *JMH*, vol. 63, no. 3 (1999), p. 677.

¹¹ I am not suggesting that Military Synthesis is an example of European exceptionalism. Ranjit Singh effectively integrated the field artillery of the European armies with the light irregular cavalry of the Sikhs. But he failed to build a stable political infrastructure. This proved to be the Achilles heel of the Khalsa military machine during the Anglo-Sikh Wars. Colonel Mouton, 'The First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-1846)', *Panjab Past and Present*, vol. 15 (1981), pp. 116-27; Donald Featherstone, *At Them with the Bayonet: The First Sikh War* (London, 1968), pp. 3, 6-14, 25, 32-35, 55-59, 72, 80, 165-66.

¹² C.A. Bayly, 'The British Military-Fiscal State and the Indigenous Resistance: India 1750-1820', in *idem.*, *Origins of Nationalism in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (New Delhi, 1998), pp. 238-75.

motors behind its administrative expansion and penetration into the society.¹³ The other aspect of John Brewer's concept like high taxation for maintaining large armies if applied to the Indian scenario will not shed much light on the contours of the British-Indian state because this trend was also present in the Mughal polity.¹⁴ In another essay, Bayly asserts that the collection and assessment of information about the 'Orient' aided the British in constructing the Indian empire.¹⁵ But he neglects the army's information collection activities. The vast amount of anthropological data, collected by the military officers for shaping the manpower procurement scheme, transformed the colonial polity from a Night Watchman State into a Knowledgeable Military State.

What was so colonial about the Sepoy Army? The Martial Race doctrine was not a peculiar South Asian colonial development. Some of the assumptions of the Martial Race ideology had roots in the Western society. Lord Bacon had written:

...It hath seldom or never been seen that the far southern people have invaded the northern, but contrariwise whereby it is manifest that the northern tract of the world is...more martial...Cold of northern parts...both makes the bodies hardest andcourage warmest.¹⁶

¹³ The linkage between the attempted expansion of the administrative tentacles of the indigenous states in south India for maintaining the revolutionary armies is pointed out by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Warfare and State Finance in Woodeyar Mysore, 1724-1725: A Missionary Perspective', *IESHR*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1989), pp. 203-33.

¹⁴ K.K. Trivedi, 'The Share of Mansabdars in State Revenue Resources: A Study of the Maintenance of Animals', *IESHR*, vol. 24, no. 4 (1987), pp. 411-22; John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London, 1989), pp. XI, 29-42, 250-51.

¹⁵ C.A. Bayly, 'Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India', *MAS*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1993), pp. 3-43.

¹⁶ Lord Bacon, 'On the Vicissitudes of Things', *Essays LVIII*, quoted in T. Miller, *Outline of Military Geography* (Cambridge, 1900), p. 324.

The Martial Race tradition could be traced back to Classical Antiquity. The Caesars preceded Roberts in believing that tall handsome men from cold frontier regions made good soldiers. So they inducted the Batavi tribe from the Rhine frontier in the corps de elite of the Roman Army- the Germani Custodies Corporis.¹⁷

Till the 11th century, the Byzantine emperors, like the 19th century British officials in India, had a liking for farmers, who were believed to be the best material for soldiering.¹⁸ The medieval Islamic polities also followed a selective enlistment policy. The Sultans believed that compared with the Greeks, Arabs, Armenians and Kurds, the Turks were much better warriors, due to their 'handsomeness' and 'manliness'. Hence the Turks were recruited from the Islamic frontier which ran along Central Asia.¹⁹

Back in India, the Mughals preferred the Iranis and the Turanis compared with the Hindustanis and the Afghans in the cavalry, which was the elite branch of their army. Mansabs were granted to selected Rajput clans: to the Rajawats and the Shaikhawat clans of the Kachawaha group of Rajputs, but not to the Narooka Rajput

¹⁷ Michael P. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar: The Roman Emperors Horse Guard* (London, 1994), pp. 77-94.

¹⁸ Speros, Vyronis JR., 'Byzantine and Turkish Societies and their Sources of Manpower', in V.J. Parry and M.E. Yapp (eds), *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East* (London, 1975), pp. 127, 151.

¹⁹ David Ayalon, 'The Mamluks of the Seljuks: Islam's Military Might at the Crossroads', *JRAS*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1996), pp. 305-33.

clans.²⁰ The British in India built upon such traditions, and this ideology was then transported to other imperial colonies in the Middle East and Africa.²¹

The absence of nationalism in the Sepoy Army was not unique to it. Like the Indian Army, the Habsburg Army also did not depend on nationalism, but depended rather on allegiance to the Emperor. The Habsburg regiments, like the regiments of the Indian Army, were composed of 3 to 4 nationalities. And the German officers of such units like the British officers of the Indian Army, had to be specialists in several languages in order to establish working relationship with their soldiers.²²

The uniqueness of the Indian Army was the excessive emphasis on regimental traditions. The army remained a loose collection of several distinct regiments, rather than a homogeneous, monolithic, unified structure. This proved adequate as long as the Indian Army was deployed to check the '*Drang Nach Osten*' of the Pathan tribes. But when faced with *Totaler Krieg* and the Imperial German Army, heavy battle casualties and mass expansion became the order of the day. For the Indian Army in France, 1914 brought defeat, death and disaster. Then the Sepoy Army faced *Gottardammerung*.

²⁰ S. Inayat Ali Zaidi, 'Ordinary Kachawaha Troopers Serving the Mughal Empire: Composition and Structure of the Contingents of the Kachawaha Nobles', *SIH*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1980), pp. 59-80.

²¹ David Omissi, 'Britain, the Assyrians and the Iraq Levies, 1919-1932', *JICH*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1989), pp. 301-22; Anthony A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "'Damnosa Hereditas': Ethnic Ranking and the Martial Races Imperative in Africa', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 3, no.4 (1980), pp. 393-414.

²² Norman Stone, 'Army and Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1900-1914', *Past and Present*, no. 33 (1966), pp. 95-111.

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